

# EARLY CALIPHATE

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By



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## PREFACE

The *Early Caliphate* is a natural sequel to *Muhammad The Prophet*, in which I offered a picture of the life of that great benefactor of humanity, the Prophet Muhammad, who of all the great men of the world is the most misunderstood. Two reasons have prompted me to undertake this task. The first is that just as the Holy Prophet brought about a transformation which is unparalleled in the history of the world, to his immediate followers it was vouchsafed to contribute "the most amazing story of conquest in the whole history of our race".\* Certainly humanity cannot afford to forget such a wonderful story. The second reason is that when I read the histories of this period written by Muslim and non-Muslim writers, I came to the conclusion that there existed many misunderstandings about the great and noble deeds of the most righteous monarchs that the world has ever produced.

In the *Early Caliphate* I have dealt with the period of thirty years that followed the death of the Holy Prophet. In Islamic History this period is known as *Khilāfa Rāshida* or the rightly-directed Caliphate, the underlying significance being that the men who were chosen to steer the temporal bark of Islam during this period were also models

\* *A Short History of the World*, by H. G. Wells.

of righteousness, and they led the Muslim nation onward both temporally and spiritually. In a ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet, this period of thirty years is specially called *Khilāfa* or Successorship to the Holy Prophet, as distinguished from *Mulk* or the Kingdom of Islam which came after it. The last phase of the Holy Prophet's life was that he was both a prophet and a king, a spiritual guide of his people as well as their temporal head, and therefore the later phase of the kingdom of Islam in which the king was only the temporal head does not fully represent the idea of successorship. The *Khilāfa Rāshida* or the Early Caliphate however is fully representative of successorship to the Prophet, and it is for this reason that I have included in the history of the Caliphate an account of the lives of the four Caliphs whose reigns constitute the Early Caliphate, *viz.*, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī.

I would draw the attention of the reader of this history to two salient points about which great misconception prevails. The first is that there is a general impression among Muslims as well as non-Muslims that though the battles which the Holy Prophet had to fight were defensive, and not aggressive, yet the wars of the Early Caliphate were undertaken with no other object than the expansion of Islam and the territorial extension of its kingdom. In this short history I have shown

that this is quite an erroneous view, and that the Muslims never sallied forth to impose their religion or even their rule on the neighbouring empires, or offer, what is generally summed up as, Islam or the *Jizya* or the sword. This question has been fully dealt with in the lives of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. The second point to which I wish to draw the reader's special attention is that an equally great misconception prevails as to the internal dissensions of the times of 'Uthmān and 'Alī. The examples of greatness set by Abū Bakr and 'Umar are not wanting in the case of 'Uthmān and 'Alī, only they are in a different sphere.

The book was written originally in Urdū in the form of a simple history. The element of the lives of the Caliphs was added in a second edition, and it is now that second edition that is being presented in English garb. The translation has been done by my able, and esteemed friend Maulvī Muḥammad Ya'qūb Khān, Editor of the *Light*, and the *Muslim Revival*, to whom my sincerest thanks are due for his labour of love. I must also thank him for the help he has given me in reading the proofs.

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## ABŪ BAKR

Early life.

'Abdullah was the name given to Abū Bakr by his parents. Abū Bakr was his surname (*Kunya*)<sup>1</sup> before Islam, while he received the title of *Siddīq* (lit., the most truthful) and '*Atīq* (lit., generous, excellent, or free) after his conversion to Islam. His father's name was 'Uthmān, but he is generally known in history by his surname Abū Quḥāfa. Umm-ul-Khair Salmā was the name of Abū Bakr's mother. Both of Abū Bakr's parents belonged to the Banī Taim clan of the tribe of Quraish. This clan occupied a position of eminence in Arabia, and questions relating to blood-money in murder cases were referred to it, Abū Quḥāfa, Abū Bakr's father, being in charge of this important function.

<sup>1</sup> Among the Arabs, a surname, generally indicating relationship to male offspring (*Ar. kunya*) was looked upon as a title of honour. The *kunya* was especially taken from the name of the eldest son, to whose name the word *ab* (lit., father) was added, and it was thus generally *father of so and so*. But *kunya* did not always express paternity; in some cases it was taken from some characteristic of the person, and the reason of this was that the word *ab* has a wide significance. Thus Abū Huraira (lit., father of kittens), the famous reporter of Ḥadīth, was so called from his kindness to cats. Abū Bakr literally means *father of the youthful camel* and there is no indication in any report as to why he assumed, or was given, this particular *kunya*. It may have been due simply to his kindness to, or love of, camels.

Abū Bakr was born in the second or third year of the Elephant<sup>1</sup> and was thus two or three years younger than the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. Nature had gifted him with high morals, and for these he commanded universal respect. Such noble virtues as helping the poor and the needy, doing good to kith and kin, rendering relief to the afflicted, hospitality and truthfulness were all found in him in an abundant measure. From his very childhood he had not so much as touched liquor. All these are the self-same virtues of which, as history tells us, the Holy Prophet was also possessed before the Call. This shows that in a way, Abū Bakr had some natural affinity to the Prophet. It seems that he had also received some education. He knew reading and writing, and was a specialist in the knowledge of the genealogy of the Qurai-shite clans. People held him in very high esteem both for his knowledge and his ripe experience of things. By profession he was a cloth merchant and this business made him quite a rich man. At the time of his acceptance of Islam, he had 40,000 gold dirhams in hard cash. According to

<sup>1</sup>Before the Muslim era known as *Hijra*, the Arabs used to reckon dates from the year of the "Elephant" which was the year in which Abraha, the Christian Governor of Yemen, led an attack on Mecca, with the intention of demolishing the Ka'ba. This army had one or more elephants in it and hence the name. The year of the Elephant was also the year of the Holy Prophet's birth. The Hijra came 53 lunar years after this.

one of his own statements, he was the wealthiest of all the Quraish traders.

When the Prophet received the Divine Call and invited people to join him, Abū Bakr was the first and foremost of the male converts to embrace Islam. Khadija, the Prophet's wife, was the only person who had accepted the faith before him. His zeal for Islam was so great that no sooner he joined its ranks, than he applied all his energy and wealth to promote the sacred cause. Many were the souls that saw the light through him. Such great sons of Islam as 'Uthmān, Zubair, 'Abdur Raḥmān-bin-'Auf, Sa'd-bin-Abī-Waqqāṣ, all owed their conversion to his preaching. His own mother Umm-ul-Khair Salmā, one of the early converts, also owed her conversion to him. His father, Abū Quḥāfa, however, came in much later, after the conquest of Mecca in the year 8 A. H. Many slaves of both sexes, who were persecuted and tortured by their masters for their acceptance of Islam, were purchased and set free by Abū Bakr. Of such, history has preserved the names of seven including the famous Bilāl. Of his wealth, he spent liberally in the cause of Islam, so that at the time of the Hijra<sup>1</sup> he had only 5,000 dirhams left with him. The Prophet himself acknowledged his

<sup>1</sup>Hijra which is generally rendered as the Flight, means

monetary services when he said : " No one's wealth has benefited me so much as the wealth of Abū Bakr." Within the courtyard of his house, he had built a small mosque. Here would he sit and recite the Qur'ān in touching strains that captivated the hearts of listeners. The Quraish objected to it and demanded that he should stop reciting the Qur'ān in a loud voice because it attracted their womenfolk and children who might renounce their ancestral faith. But Abū Bakr did not yield on this point, and he left no stone unturned to spread the light of Islam. During this period the ties of affection between him and the Prophet grew stronger and stronger. His monetary and missionary services endeared him all the more to the Prophet, so much so, that the Master would in person call frequently at the house of the disciple. And when at length there came the time of Hijra, it was Abū Bakr whom the Prophet chose for a comrade in this critical hour.

originally *cutting off* from friendly intercourse or *forsaking*, and in the history of Islam it has come to signify the migration of the Holy Prophet and his Companions from Mecca to Medīna to which he was compelled on account of the growing opposition of his enemies and severe persecution of the Muslims by them. The Muslim era is named after it and dates from the first day of the first month (Muharram) of the year in which the Hijra took place, that event itself taking place more than two months after the commencement of the year. The year of Hijra probably coincides with 19th April 622 of the Christian era, while the Hijra itself took place on 20th June.

Abū Bakr was held in great respect by the people, not only for his noble birth but also for his personal worth, his high morals and his wealth. Notwithstanding all these, however, he could not escape persecution in the cause of Islam. In connection with the conversion of his mother, Umm-ul-Khair, to Islam, it is recorded that one day Abū Bakr began openly to preach the new faith. This was the time when the Prophet himself confined his activities to secret preaching in the house of Zaid-bin-Arqam. Prayers were also said there in secret. When the Meccans saw Abū Bakr openly preach Islam, they fell on him and gave him a hard beating. He fell down unconscious. His own kinsmen took him up and carried him home. On recovering consciousness, the very first question he asked was, "Where is the Prophet?" His mother ascertained the Prophet's whereabouts, and immediately both reached the house of Zaid-bin-Arqam where the mother accepted Islam. When the Meccans put the Muslims to severe persecutions, the Prophet counselled them to emigrate to Abyssinia. Abū Bakr was one of those who chose to bid farewell to their native land. On the way he met a chief, Ibn-ud-Daghna by name, who asked him whither he was going. "My own people's persecutions have driven me

out of home and hearth," replied Abū Bakr. "A man like you," said the chief, "certainly must not be exiled—you help the poor, you are kind to kith and kin, you render succour to the distressed and show hospitality to the way-farer." And bringing him back to Mecca, he had it proclaimed that Abū Bakr was in his protection. This protection, however, did not last long. As usual, Abū Bakr started his loud recitation of the Qur'ān in the mosque which he had built in the yard of his house which happened to be on a public thoroughfare. The Meccans were not prepared to tolerate this and so Ibn-ud-Daghna had to withdraw the protection he had pledged. Abū Bakr was unmoved. He did not care for the withdrawal of the protection and kept up his usual recitations.

His daughter  
Ayesha is married  
to the Prophet.

In the tenth year of the Call, the Prophet lost his faithful wife Khadīja who at the time of her death was sixty-five years of age. During the many and hard trials through which the Prophet had passed, she had been his greatest comforter. This bereavement, therefore, was a great shock and told heavily on him. Seeing him greatly depressed, a Muslim lady suggested to him that he should marry, and proposed the name of Abū Bakr's daughter, 'Āyesha. The young girl had

already been betrothed to Jubair, son of Muṭ'im, and when the lady in question mentioned her proposal to Abū Bakr, he was glad to strengthen his already strong ties of affection with the Prophet, but wanted first to settle the matter with Jubair. This being done, the *nikāḥ* (marriage ceremonial) was performed, though the consummation of marriage was delayed for five years on account of 'Āyesha's age. There is the weightiest testimony on record that 'Āyesha was married to the Holy Prophet in the tenth year of the Call in the month of Shawwāl, shortly after the death of Khadija. The Hijra took place in the 14th year of the Call, in the month of Rabi' I, or three years and five months after the marriage. The consummation of marriage took place eighteen months after the Hijra according to most trustworthy reports. Thus between the marriage and its consummation there was a period of full five years or more. The commonly received account that 'Āyesha was six or seven years at the time of marriage and nine years at the time of consummation is, therefore, unacceptable on the very face of it, for it reduces the period between the marriage and its consummation to two or three years at the most, while as a matter of fact, it was on no account less than five years. And there are reports which show that 'Āyesha was



nine years old at the time of marriage<sup>1</sup>, and thus she could not be less than fourteen at the time of consummation of marriage which took place after the battle of Badr in the second year of the Hijra. The report that she was already betrothed also supports the conclusion that the commonly received report about 'Āyesha's age is based on some misconception. Again, the Iṣāba, speaking of Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, says that she was born five years before the Call and was about five years older than 'Āyesha. A calculation on this basis would also show that 'Āyesha was ten years old at the time of *nikāḥ*, and fifteen years old at the time of the consummation of her marriage.

At last the Meccans' persecutions reached their climax. Under the Prophet's orders, the Muslims began to emigrate to Medina. Abū Bakr also made ready for emigration, but the Prophet told him to wait till he (the Prophet) should receive the Divine permission to go. The Muslims cleared off one by one. Abū Bakr and 'Alī were the only two who kept behind with the Prophet. At length, there arrived the

<sup>1</sup> Ibn-i-Sa'd mentions this report in his *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. VIII, p. 42. The words of the report are: "The Holy Prophet performed *nikāḥ* with 'Āyesha when she was nine years or seven years of age." There is another report on page 41 of the same book that 'Āyesha was nine years of age when the Holy Prophet married her.

hour, when the plans to assassinate the Prophet were matured in every detail. Then did the Prophet receive the Divine word to quit. He informed Abū Bakr, accordingly, to get ready, and leaving 'Alī in his own bed, left his house in the dark of night and passed unnoticed through the would-be assassins who had gathered round his house. Three miles away from Mecca, there was a cave known as the cave of Thaur. There the two refugees took shelter. Abū Bakr was the first to enter. Dark as it was, he cleaned the cave with his own hands, and then asked the Prophet to enter. In the morning the Meccans began the search and pursued the track right up to the mouth of the cave. From within the cave the refugees could even see the feet of their pursuers. This overwhelmed Abū Bakr with grief. The Prophet forthwith consoled him saying, "Fear not, for God is with us." The pursuers could see nothing inside the cave and turned back. Food arrangements had also been made beforehand by Abū Bakr. He had instructed his servant to drive his herd of goats, while grazing them, on to the mouth of the cave. The milk of these goats was the only thing they had to live on. Thus went on things for three days and three nights consecutively, till, on the fourth, they mounted the camels which Abū Bakr had arranged

for this very purpose and left for Medīna. Though the party also included a servant of Abū Bakr and a guide, the privilege of doing necessary services for the Prophet Abū Bakr reserved for himself till they reached Medīna.

Services in Medina. In Mecca, Islam had but limited needs which grew in extent with its advent in Medīna. Here as well Abū Bakr was the foremost to respond to the calls of the Faith. When money was wanted to build a mosque, Abū Bakr paid for the site out of his own pocket. But the greatest need of the community now was the carrying on of a hard struggle against the numerous enemies who were now bent on annihilating it by sword, and the Muslim community had therefore to put up a fight in self-defence. But the carrying on of an incessant war against an ever-increasing foe necessitated the utmost sacrifices from the adherents of the cause, and here, too, Abū Bakr was the foremost as he was at Mecca. On one occasion, 'Umar offered full one half of his savings in the cause. This time at least, he hoped, he would out-do Abū Bakr. Presently there came Abū Bakr bringing with him all that he had. "What have you left behind at home?" enquired the Prophet. "God and His Prophet," came the reply. On his poor relations, Abū Bakr spent most liberally of his wealth. When one such relation, Miṣṭah, was

misled by the hypocrites and he joined 'Āyesha's defamers who spread false reports slandering her, Abū Bakr withheld the help which he used to give him. A revelation in the Holy Qur'ān (24: 22) however, recommended pardon. It did not behove a man of Abū Bakr's calibre and generosity, said the verse in question, to withdraw his helping hand from a poor relation merely for defaming his daughter. Thereupon, he again took upon himself the maintenance of Miṣṭah.

Parts in war-fare.

In Medina, Abū Bakr was the Prophet's right hand man in affairs of state. He also took part in battles and actively fought. He was never missed at a battle in which the Prophet joined in person. The first battle was fought at Badr<sup>1</sup>. The enemy's numerical strength was thrice that of the Muslims but their fighting strength was greater still, for they were well-equipped and experienced warriors. The Prophet retired to a hut and prostrated himself in supplication before God. "O God," said he, "if this day this handful of Thy servants perish, there will be none to worship Thee on this earth." Abū Bakr kept guard at the entrance and heard his

<sup>1</sup> Badr is the name of a well situated at a distance of three days' journey from Medina, the whole distance between Mecca and Medina being thirteen days' journey. This shows that the enemy were advancing on Medina, and it was to meet them that the Muslims had left Medina. The Battle of Badr was fought in the month of Ramaḍān in the second year of the Hijra.

Master's fervent prayers. At last he spoke out. "O Prophet of God," he said, "He will undoubtedly come to your help as He has promised." Then they sallied forth into the field of battle and Abū Bakr displayed great valour. The Muslims won. Seventy prisoners of war fell into their hands. Abū Bakr counselled the Prophet to release them on payment of ransom money. This was done, as it was quite in accordance with the Quranic teachings. At the Battle of Uḥud<sup>1</sup> when the Muslims suffered a reverse, Abū Bakr stood firm to his ground. The Meccans shouted : " Is Muḥammad there in the midst of his people ? Is Abū Bakr there in the midst of his people ? Is 'Umar there in the midst of his people ? " " They are all alive and here to bring you down," shouted back 'Umar at last, on which the enemy left the field. The very next day they were given a chase. Abū Bakr was duly there in the chase. Then came the battle known as the Battle of the Ditch<sup>2</sup>. Here as well Abū Bakr was seen work-

<sup>1</sup>The Battle of Uḥud was fought in the third year of Hijra. Uḥud is the name of a mountain which is situated to the north of Medina at a distance of about three miles from it. The Quraish had this time come up very close, and as they were three thousand strong while the Muslims were only seven hundred, the Holy Prophet preferred remaining within Medina, and went out to meet the enemy at Uḥud because the majority desired this.

<sup>2</sup>This battle was fought in the fifth year of the Hijra. The strength of the enemy on this occasion was from ten to twenty-five thousand and the Muslims had therefore no alternative but to remain besieged.

ing as a common labourer, digging the ditch for protecting Medīna from the on-rush of the enemy. Medīna remained in a state of siege for thirty days after which the enemy retreated. He was also present at Ḥudaibiya<sup>1</sup> when a truce was concluded. The Muslims were much upset about it as they thought that the terms were humiliating to themselves. 'Umar was particularly agitated and came to Abū Bakr, saying, "Why at all must we submit to terms so humiliating, if our cause is a righteous one?" Abū Bakr replied that the Prophet must have acted in obedience to the will of God. "Did not the Prophet say," argued 'Umar, "that we will perform the pilgrimage?" "Indeed, he did," rejoined Abū Bakr "but he never said, this very year." This was the very reply that 'Umar got from the Prophet when he put the same question to him. In the first stages of the battle of Hunain<sup>2</sup> the Muslims were forced to retreat under the pressure of the enemy's archers. Here again Abū Bakr kept firmly to his ground and the battle was ultimately won. When money was needed for

<sup>1</sup>It is situated at about nine miles from Mecca. In the year 6 A.H. the Prophet had gone with 1,400 companions to perform a pilgrimage but the Quraish did not allow him to proceed. A truce was ultimately made.

<sup>2</sup>A place to the east of Mecca. This battle was fought in the year 8 A.H.

the Tabūk<sup>1</sup> expedition, Abū Bakr placed the whole of his wealth at the disposal of the nation. In the ninth year of the Hijra he was put at the head of the pilgrim party to Mecca.

Abu Bakr as  
Imam during the  
Prophet's last  
days.

About the end of the tenth year of Hijra, the Prophet went to perform the pilgrimage. This is known as the *Hajjat-ul-Widā'*, i.e., the Last Pilgrimage. It was revealed to him on the occasion of this pilgrimage that the religion of Islam had now attained to perfection, and that his time had drawn nigh. On return to Medīna, some two months and a half afterwards, the Prophet was taken ill. Notwithstanding his illness, he attended the mosque and conducted prayers personally so long as he could. But he was too weak to talk much. One day in a sermon he said, "God has given to a servant of His the choice between this worldly life and the life with Him. The servant has chosen the one with the Lord." This brought tears to Abū Bakr's eyes. The hint was clear enough. The Prophet's life was coming to an end. Then the Prophet ordered that all doors opening on the mosque should be closed with the

<sup>1</sup>This expedition was undertaken in the year 9 A. H. on news being received that the Cæsar was making preparations for attacking Arabia to put an end to the growing power of Islam. The Prophet encamped at Tabūk, midway between Medīna and Damascus, and finding that the enemy had not attacked the territory of Arabia, returned to Medīna without fighting.

exception of Abū Bakr's door, which might remain open. Gradually he became too weak to come out to the mosque. One day thrice was word sent inside, but he could not muster strength to go to the mosque. So he directed that Abū Bakr should lead the prayers. 'Āyesha submitted that her father was too tender-hearted, and while reciting the Qur'ān he broke into weeping. This would make his recitation inaudible. The Prophet did not accept this excuse and insisted that Abū Bakr should lead prayers. Consequently, for the last three days of the Prophet's life on this earth, Abū Bakr acted as the Imam. This was, in a way, an indication of the Prophet's mind that he considered Abū Bakr to be the fittest person to succeed him. According to a report, the Prophet actually suggested to 'Āyesha or her brother, 'Abdurrahmān, that he wished to make a will in writing in favour of Abū Bakr, but then he said there was no need of it. There could be no difference in the case of Abū Bakr. God and the Muslims would not be reconciled to any choice other than Abū Bakr<sup>1</sup>.

The Prophet's  
demise, Rabi', 11  
A. H. (June 632  
A. D.)

It was Monday, the 1st or 2nd of Rabi' I in the year 11 A. H. when Muḥammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him,

<sup>1</sup>"Ṭabaqāt Ibn-i-Sa'd," Vol. 3, page 128.



breathed his last. No doubt he had been bed-ridden for good many days, and had passed through some very critical moments, but only that very morning he had felt much better and had a talk with some persons. It was believed that the crisis was over, and Abū Bakr who had so far kept by his bed-side had taken his permission and gone home to Sunḥ where he lived. Few people, therefore, were prepared to believe the news when it came. 'Umar took it as a piece of mischief by some hypocrite, and sword in hand, he stood in the mosque to stop this disquieting news from getting abroad. Abū Bakr heard the news and forthwith he hastened back and went straight into 'Āyesha's chamber. It was there that the Prophet had been nursed. He found that he was really dead. He kissed his forehead and gave vent to his sorrowing love in these touching words: "Sweet wert thou in life and sweet art thou in death." Then he came out into the mosque and communicated the news to the congregation in his famous address: "Listen ye all! Whoever worshipped Muḥammad, then certainly Muḥammad has passed away, and whoever worshipped God, let him know that God is Ever-living and He never dieth." And he quoted the following verse of the Qur'ān which asserts that the Holy Prophet must pass away as

all prophets before him had passed away: "And Muḥammad is no more than an Apostle; all apostles before him have passed away" (3: 143). This convinced the people that the news of the Prophet's death was true.

Abu Bakr's  
election as Caliph.

Abū Bakr and 'Umar were yet there in the mosque when someone from among the Anṣār<sup>1</sup> (helpers) came with the news that the Anṣār had assembled in the Thaḳīfa Banī Sā'ida, a place used as a council hall by the people of Medīna, and were discussing the election of a successor to the Prophet. It was a critical moment. Had the Anṣār succeeded in setting up a man of their choice and the rest of the people disapproved of that choice, that very day the solidarity of Islam would have been shattered to pieces. No time was to be lost. Abū Bakr and 'Umar hastened to the council hall. On arrival there, they found that Sa'd bin 'Ubāda had just finished his speech, the result of which was that the Anṣār had agreed to elect him as a successor to the Holy Prophet. On the arrival of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, one of the Anṣār stood up, and in

<sup>1</sup>The Muslims living at Medīna were either the *Muhājirīn* i.e., those who had fled from Mecca and settled at Medīna, or the *Anṣār* (lit. helpers) i.e., the residents of Medīna who had invited the Prophet to live among them. The *Muhājirīn* belonged generally to the tribe of Quraish, whose supremacy was admitted throughout Arabia on account of their guardianship of the Ka'ba. The *Anṣār* belonged to two tribes, the Aus and the Khazraj.

further confirmation of the choice, dwelt on the claims of the Anṣār and their virtues. Abū Bakr, in reply, said that so far as service to the cause of the Faith was concerned, there could be no two opinions about the Anṣār. But the people of Arabia, he reminded them, would not submit to any king other than a Quraishite. And this was perfectly true. Never before in her history had Arabia known any such thing as allegiance to a king. Every clan, every tribe, had been independent, and none had ever been under the sway of a rival clan or tribe. To the tribe of Quraish, they did indeed look up with respect and veneration by virtue of the fact that to this tribe belonged the sacred privilege of the custody of the spiritual centre of Arabia, *viz.*, the Ka'ba. In the first place, the Arabs were temperamentally averse to owning allegiance to one king or overlord. Love of unfettered freedom had by birth and breeding become part and parcel of their nature, and every tribe prized its undisputed sovereignty above all else. And again, even if they could be reconciled to the idea of a central authority, they could never agree that that authority should be vested in any tribe other than the Quraish, whom they had learnt by long-established tradition to venerate, and to whom belonged the additional distinction that the Prophet

himself came of that tribe. Abū Bakr's statesman-like foresight at once grasped the situation and he put it before the assembly of Anṣār. It was thereupon suggested by the Anṣār as a solution of the difficulty that instead of one there might be elected two successors, one from among themselves and another from among the Quraish. But this meant the disruption of the unity of Islam. After much discussion, the Anṣār came round to the view-point of Abū Bakr. One of them stood up and said: "For the pleasure of God and in obedience to His will alone have we been sacrificing life and property, and now that the best interests of Islam so require, we submit to the election of a successor from among the Quraish. Just as we stood by the Prophet, even so do we pledge to stand by his successor." And so saying, he took hold of Abū Bakr's hand and swore allegiance to him. According to some reports, the first to do so were 'Umar and Abū 'Ubaida, and thereafter the Anṣār, batch after batch, came forward to make the pledge at the hand of Abū Bakr. Sa'd-bin-'Ubāda was the solitary exception.

Abu Bakr's statesmanship.

It was due to the prudence of Abū Bakr and 'Umar that a most threatening calamity was successfully averted. Had it not been for their speedy action in reaching the council hall, had they not met the

situation with the Divine light that illuminated their hearts and prevailed upon all assembled, Islam would have found itself faced with a most formidable dissension within its own house which would have ended in the total distraction of its power at that early stage. On the one hand, there was the funeral of the man for whose love they had for a quarter of a century sacrificed their lives, their property and their all, the man whose separation they could not for one moment bear—there was the duty to see the body of their Master to its last resting-place. On the other hand, there was the duty to save Islam from disruption at this critical moment, when one false step at the council hall, which had almost been taken, would have sealed the doom of Islam itself. And this call of national duty was too urgent, too imperative to permit of any delay. Personal temptation to remain close to the Prophet's body, irresistible as it must have been, had to be sacrificed, and they did it without a moment's hesitation. And for thus saving Islam at that most tender age, posterity must ever remain indebted to these two great souls. Abū Bakr's own words on his death-bed show that it was only to save Islam that he left the dead body of the Prophet. Calling 'Umar to his death-bed, he gave him directions regarding reinforce-

ments for Muthannā in the following words :  
 "Command a levy for Al-Muthannā. Tarry not.  
 If I die, as I may this day, wait not till the  
 evening ; if I linger on to-night, wait not till the  
 morning. Let not sorrow for me divert thee  
 from this service of the Lord. Ye saw what I  
 myself did when the Prophet died (and there could  
 be no greater sorrow for mankind than that);  
 truly, if grief had stayed me then from girding  
 my loins in the cause of the Lord and of His  
 Prophet, the Faith had fared badly ; the flame of  
 rebellion had been surely kindled in the city."  
 (Muir's *Caliphate*.)

Abu Bakr's  
 address to the  
 people.

The spark of dissension which may  
 have blazed up into a conflagration  
 and consumed the entire fabric of  
 Islam having been thus extinguished, the Pro-  
 phet's body was with due solemnity interred the  
 following day. The question as to where the  
 grave should be dug also gave rise to a difference of  
 opinion. This, too, was settled by Abū Bakr who  
 decreed that a Prophet is buried on the very  
 spot where he dies. So 'Āyesha's chamber  
 became the Prophet's tomb. Then came the cere-  
 mony of general pledge-giving at the hand of Abū  
 Bakr as Caliph. After all had sworn allegiance,  
 Abū Bakr delivered an address, in the course of  
 which he observed that nowhere in the depth of

his heart was there any desire to be elected Caliph, that he had accepted the responsible office only to avert an impending catastrophe. He also expounded the principle of Caliphate or rulership which, if acted up to by the world of Islam, would have saved the world-wide empire of Islam from the decomposition and decay which overtook it in later times. "Help me," said the Caliph, "if I am in the right. Set me right, if I am in the wrong!" In other words, he laid it down as the very corner-stone of government that all power was ultimately vested in the people themselves. If a ruler administered this power in the best interests of the people, it was the duty of the people to render him every help. If, however, he worked against the good of the people, he forfeited his claim to the latter's loyalty and support. In the same address, he gave in most pithy words, the main function of all government, *viz.*, the preservation of peace and order and safeguarding the rights of citizens: "The weak among you shall be strong in my eye till I have vindicated his just rights, and the strong among you shall be weak in my eye till I have made him fulfil the obligations due from him." He also told his people in what lay the secret of their life and prosperity: "No nation abandoned Jihād (struggle) in the path of God but God

abased it." And he concluded with the beautiful words : "Obey me as long as I obey God and His Prophet. In case I disobey God and His Prophet, I have no right to obedience from you." Each word of this splendid address contains volumes of wisdom and may well serve as a beacon light to the Muslim world in these dark and dreary days of universal decay. A Head there must be in any scheme of national organisation, call him a King, a Caliph, a President, or an Imām ; one ostensible symbol of national unity and solidarity there must be. But the will of this Head of the nation ceases to be binding on the people, the moment he transgresses the limits laid down by God and His Prophet.

'Ali and Abu Bakr. There are reports to the effect that for six months 'Ali did not take the oath of allegiance. Their authenticity is, however, doubtful. There are others, on the contrary, which say that he took the oath the same day. It appears that 'Alī and Zubair were not present at the general pledge-giving ceremony at the Mosque. Abū Bakr expressly sent for them from their homes, and remonstrated with them for their staying away which might lead to a split in the camp of Islam. Thereupon both made the formal pledge, accepting Abū Bakr as Caliph. It is just possible that Abū Bakr's verdict against Faṭīma



in the dispute over the Prophet's inheritance might have offended 'Alī as it did the noble lady herself, and the slight rupture between 'Alī and the Caliph on this score might have lent a handle to the report that 'Alī did not take the oath. But the fact that when Medīna was attacked by hostile forces within a couple of months after the Prophet's demise, 'Alī and Zubair stood loyal and steadfast by Abū Bakr and actually participated in the defence operations under the Caliph's orders, should suffice to give the lie to all such reports.

Abū Bakr's election once for all  
 Abu Bakr was  
 duly elected as  
 Caliph. settled the all-important problem of  
 succession to kingship in Islam.

Under the constitution of Islam, it was demonstrated for the guidance of posterity that the head of the State must be elected by the people. This golden rule ceased to be the guiding principle of Muslims after the period of the four rightly-guided Caliphs. Kingship instead of a public affair became a matter of private inheritance. This went a long way to undermine the vigour of the body-politic of Islam. The words in some reports that pledge-giving to Abū Bakr "came all of a sudden" need not mislead anybody. They certainly do not imply that he was not duly elected. Election, as shown above, was regularly discussed, and after

consideration of the pros and cons of the question from diverse view-points, choice fell by popular consent on Abū Bakr. The words convey no more than that the event of election was precipitated. As a matter of course, the first and foremost thing to receive attention should have been the Prophet's funeral and burial. But, the separatist activities of the Anṣār at the council hall thrust the question of election in the forefront, and it was in this sense that it overtook the people by surprise. Even if not thus precipitated, and if an all-Muslim conference were summoned subsequently, the choice must just the same have fallen on Abū Bakr. He was the right man for this great office. For learning and piety, for insight into the Quranic teachings, for high morals, Abū Bakr was head and shoulders above his compatriots. The Prophet himself had during his sickness appointed him to lead the congregation prayers. In point of experience of men and matters, foresight and physical prowess, he also possessed a testimonial from the Prophet himself, inasmuch as the latter had, at the time of emigration, selected him for his own company.

Usama's army  
despatched to Syria.  
11 A.H. 632 A.D.

The very first thing that Abū Bakr did on his accession to the Caliphate was the despatching of Usāma's army to the Syrian Frontier, orders for the

expedition having been given by the Prophet himself before he fell ill. The Eastern principality of the Christian Roman Empire was a source of constant trouble to the peaceful Muslim population on the borders of Arabia, and it was to check its depredations that the Prophet had given the orders. The command was entrusted to Usāma, a young man of twenty, whose father Zaid had met martyrdom in an earlier Syrian expedition in the battle of Mūta. Distinguished men like Abū Bakr and 'Umar were to serve under the youthful general. In this, the Prophet had set a practical example of the lofty ideal of the equality of man for which Islam stands. Zaid was the son of a slave, yet in the house of Islam, he was as good as any other, and such illustrious stars of the Quraish as Abū Bakr and 'Umar were required to serve under his command. In person had the Prophet made all arrangements, and bound the banner for the army. Usāma was encamped outside Medīna, ready to start, but in the meantime the Prophet's illness assumed a turn for the worse. Usāma, therefore, had to postpone the departure of his army. On assuming headship of the government, Abū Bakr directed that the Master's last command must be carried out, and ordered Usāma to proceed. These were, however, critical days at home. The whole of the peninsula of Arabia was in a state of unrest

and disorder. Towards the close of the Prophet's life, false prophets such as Musailma, Aswad and Ṭulaiḥa had already arisen among the Banī Ḥanīfa the Yemenites and the Banī Asad respectively, and created disturbance in the country by beguiling the people. The news of the Prophet's death spread like wild fire, and several tribes under their influence rose in revolt against the central authority of Medīna. Wild rumours of these had disturbed the peace of the whole country, and Medīna itself was in danger of attack. An expedition to the Syrian frontier was hardly thinkable under the circumstances. The companions approached the Caliph to withdraw his orders. The depletion of Medīna of the army, they argued, might tempt the insurgents to fall upon the capital itself and put an end to the Caliphate. "Who am I to withhold the army that the Prophet of God himself ordered to proceed!"—was the firm reply of the Caliph. "Come whatever may," he said, "Medīna may stand or fall, the Caliphate may live or die, the Prophet's word must be fulfilled." Overtures were also made to him through 'Umar that Usāma was only a young man and the command of an expedition so great must be entrusted to some one with a riper experience. "How can I set aside a man whom the Prophet himself put in command!" was the Caliph's stern reply.

At last the army set out, and Abū Bakr accompanied it on foot to see it off. Usāma was on horse-back and he insistently implored that either the Caliph might permit a horse to be brought for him or he might be allowed to dismount and walk on foot with the Caliph, but to no avail. Thus did he say good-bye to the army consisting of some of the most prominent of the companions. He could not spare 'Umar, but as 'Umar was a soldier of Usāma's army under the Prophet's orders, the Caliph asked Usāma to leave him behind.

False claimants  
to Prophethood.

The expedition to Syria left Medīna practically defenceless. The peninsula was in a state of disorder. The main cause, as already stated, was that false prophets had sprung up in different places. Before the advent of the Prophet, Arabia had witnessed no such claimant, but the success of the Prophet's mission fired many a heart with ambition, and several pretenders arose in various parts of the country with claims to Divine mission. This was a new and a most dangerous attack on Islam, and had it not been for the fact that the plant of Islam was tended by the Almighty hand of God Himself, it had little chance of surviving this general upheaval. It seems, however, as if Providence had expressly designed this to demonstrate that a

false prophet can not succeed, whatever his temporal backing, whereas a true Prophet must succeed even in the teeth of the bitterest opposition. There were as many as four or five of these pretenders that raised their own standards. And to the standard of each one of them rallied quite a large army from among their respective tribes. Yet, within a short time, each one of them met with utter failure, though Islam itself was in a state of helplessness at the time. On the other hand, the rise and spread of Islam presents a wonderful manifestation of the hand of Providence. A solitary man stands up in the midst of a war-like people and proclaims the message of God. His own tribe, rather than back him up, deserts him and turns into his worst foe. He is turned out of home and hearth. His enemies conspire to take his very life. The whole of the country is out to destroy him and his mission in bloody warfare. But phenomenal is the triumph with which that lonely, helpless and persecuted man is crowned—triumph without a parallel in the annals of man. He is exalted, in the course of a few brief years, to the spiritual as well as temporal kingship of Arabia. No human skill, courage or ingenuity could accomplish what was a miracle on the face of it, with the hand of God unmistakably discernible at the back of it. If a war-like people,

as the Arabs were, could be converted by force of arms, these false prophets with their large hosts should have soon triumphed. Musailma, one of the pretenders, alone had sixty thousand strong warriors around his standard. The utter failure of all these attempts is nothing short of a seal of Divine confirmation on the fact that it was not physical force that brought about the wonderful transformation in Arabia. It was the hand of God working in support of a solitary man that brought about the conversion of the whole peninsula.

Of these pretenders, Aswad 'Ansī was the first to arise in Yemen. He was the chief of his tribe and a wealthy man. By giving out that he was in communication with the spirit-world, he began to exercise influence over the people. At the same time, he entered into secret alliance with the neighbouring chieftains, and when he had gathered enough of strength, he stood in open revolt against Islam, and turned the Prophet's deputies out. This was in the year 10 A. H. Aswad fell upon Najrān and annexed that province. He also took possession of Ṣan'aa, the capital of Yemen, slew the Governor, Shahr-bin-Bāzān, and married his widow. Thus he subjugated the province of Yemen and the whole of southern Arabia. News of this was brought to the Prophet who

commissioned Ma'ādh-bin Jabal and some other officials to quell this rising. At length, one night, a near relation of the slain governor of Yemen, Firoz Dailmī by name, stole into Aswad's palace and dispatched him. This happened a day or two before the Prophet's demise. News of this reached Medīna when Abū Bakr had been proclaimed as Caliph. But when the news of the Prophet's death reached Yemen, the flames of revolt, subdued to some extent by the murder of Aswad, blazed up once more, and the standard of rebellion raised by Aswad was kept flying.

*Musailma.*

Musailma was another pretender who set himself up as a prophet. He came of the tribe of Banī Ḥanīfa, and was one of the deputation of his people that waited upon the Prophet at Medīna. On his return home, he began his propaganda by laying claim to prophethood. He composed some clumsy sentences which he gave out as revelation from God, and also pretended that he could work miracles. In an epistle to the Prophet he wrote that he had been made a co-partner with him in his Divine commission, and rulership of the peninsula was to be equally divided between the Quraish and his own tribe. In reply, the Prophet wrote to say that as regards the land, it belonged to God, Who bestowed it on whomsoever He pleased, and as regards the hereafter, it



was awarded only to the righteous. The Prophet also sent an emissary to Musailma to dissuade him from his false pretensions. The latter, nevertheless, raised his standard of revolt in Yamāma, and was at length killed in action against the Muslims during the régime of Abū Bakr. The Holy Prophet had once seen in a vision two bracelets on his hands which he had blown off with a puff of his breath. This, he observed, referred to these two pretenders, Aswad and Musailma. The interpretation was later on amply borne out by events. Of the four pretenders that rose in Arabia, Aswad and Musailma were the only two that were killed. The remaining two, Ṭulaiḥa and Sajāḥ ultimately embraced Islam.

**Ṭulaiḥa.**

Ṭulaiḥa was the chief of the Banī-Asad and a famous warrior of Najd. Once it so happened that his tribe was crossing a desert and could not find water anywhere. Ṭulaiḥa pointed out a certain place where, he said, water would be found. This proving true, Ṭulaiḥa laid claim to prophethood calling this his miracle. At the Prophet's death he stood up in open revolt, but being defeated by Khālid, he fled to Syria. Subsequently when amnesty was granted to his tribe, he also returned and joined the fold of Islam: In the reign of 'Umar, he distinguished himself for his valour and feats of arms in Mesopotamia, under the

banner of Islam.

Sajāh, a woman, was the fourth pretender who laid claim to a Divine message. She came of the tribe of Banī-Yarbū' in central Arabia. Her people had, however, settled in Mesopotamia among the Christian tribe of Banī-Taghlib. Thus she was brought up as a Christian. When she heard that there was disturbance all over the peninsula, she seized the opportunity, and entering into alliance with the neighbouring Christian tribes, marched against Medīna at the head of a large army. Reaching Banī-Tamīm, she invited her ancestral tribe, the Banī-Yarbū', to join hands with her, and promised them a share in the rule of the land. Her offer was accepted and the Banī-Yarbū' rallied to her standard under the leadership of Mālik-bin-Nuwaira. The rest of the tribes of Banī-Tamīm, however, rejected her offer, and she attempted to overpower them by force of arms, but being repulsed, she directed herself towards Yamāma to fall upon Musailma. The latter was in no mood to give her a battle. He sent her presents and made overtures for peace. She consented to pay him a visit and during the interview each confirmed the other's claim to prophethood, and a temporary marriage seems to have been the result. After a stay of three days with Musailma, she retraced her steps to her own people, the Banī-

Taghlib. The Muslim army was too strong and her courage failed her. She would not risk an encounter. She embraced Islam in the reign of Mu'āwīya.

The apostasy  
movement.

There arises a question of great importance. How was it that no sooner the Prophet closed his eyes than tribe after tribe renounced the faith and rose in revolt? Was it because their conversion was the result of any pressure brought to bear upon them, and now that the Prophet's demise afforded an opportunity to throw off the yoke imposed on them, they eagerly seized it? How to account for this wild conflagration that spread over the entire length and breadth of the country and threatened to consume all? That some of the tribes did apostatize is no doubt true, but that apostasy affected the whole of Arabia is not borne out historically. The fact is that such of the Muslims as had embraced Islam some good time before the Prophet's death, and were thus well-grounded in the teachings and spirit of the faith, never wavered in their allegiance to it. Their devotion was put to the most crucial of tests but was never found wanting. In thick and thin they stood by Islam, staunch and steadfast, and knew not a moment's hesitation to bear the brunt of any hardship in vindication of the faith. Even those who were of no more than just a couple of years'

standing were devoted heart and soul. Hence it was that whereas the countryside all around was in flames, Mecca was perfectly calm and quiet. There was not a single case of apostasy, and not a little finger was raised against the authority of Islam. But the vast bulk of the people had only just joined the fold when the Prophet passed away. That they had done so of their own free choice is a clear historical fact. But it is one thing to profess a faith and quite another to get into the inner spirit of the faith. This latter they had not enough of time or opportunity to do. They were like children just put in the school when the Master passed away, and thus let loose, they made a mess of things. Unlettered and of uncouth manners as these Beduins were, it was no easy task to work any appreciable transformation in them in the course of a few months that they had been in the new faith. That the whole of the peninsula, barring a sprinkling of Jews and Christians here and there, abandoned their idolatrous and polytheistic creeds and voluntarily embraced Islam is undoubtedly a most mighty revolution—a revolution without a parallel in the pages of history, both sacred and secular—and redounds to the unrivalled glory of the great man who wrought it. Nevertheless, it was a physical impossibility to arrange, in a few months that the Prophet lived

after that, for the proper education or training of the masses scattered over a vast territory with very scanty means of intercourse and communication. Those who came in deputation to the Prophet from these distant tribes of the desert, took back with them a deep impress of Islam, but they were only a drop in the ocean. The Prophet did all that could possibly be done to see that the vast masses might receive some sort of education in the teachings of Islam. From amongst those who had imbibed the spirit of the faith by sojourn in the Prophet's company, he would send out missionaries to distant parts. But the supply of such qualified men was by no means adequate to meet the demand. Towards the close of the Prophet's life, tribe after tribe sent in deputations to declare their allegiance, and Medīna had not enough of men to meet the demand. Nor was it desirable to deplete the seat and centre of the movement of all eminent men. The Qur'an too had forbidden such a course and advised that, rather than disintegrate the force, it must be concentrated, that Medīna must serve as the centre of learning to which selected men from different tribes must come and receive their education and imbibe the spirit of the faith, and thus duly qualified go back to their own respective tribes and there kindle the light of Islam<sup>1</sup>. But obviously a

<sup>1</sup> "And it does not beseem the believers that they should go

scheme on these lines could not but take some time to mature, and the Prophet had hardly had any time to do it. The result was that large numbers of these children of the desert who had only latterly joined the ranks of Islam and were ignorant of its true worth and spirit, lapsed again into their tribal creeds, and once more challenged the authority of Islam.

Refusal to pay zakat. Yet another thing to bear in mind in this connection is that it is not his-

torically true to say that the whole of Arabia renounced Islam. There were still many people who were true to the faith but whose connection, through the temporary ascendancy of the pretenders, was cut off from Medīna. They were neither apostates nor the confederates of the rebels, though owing to the pressure of the latter they could not openly side with the central government. There were many others whose only contention was that no Zakāt<sup>2</sup> (tax) should be levied on them. Born in freedom and bred to freedom, these dwellers of the desert were utter strangers to notions of a state on a national

forth all together; why should not a company from every party from among them come forth that they may apply themselves to obtain understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they go back to them so that they may be cautious.' (9: 122).

<sup>2</sup> Zakāt is a tax levied on the rich from among the Muslims for the help of the poor. It is generally one-fortieth of the annual savings when they are above Rs. 52, 8 as.

scale, with power and authority centralized in one place to which all the rest must own allegiance. Their own individual tribal independence, they prized above all else. Long centuries of unfettered freedom had rendered them intolerant by temperament of any authority other than their own. Islam, however, stood for welding these numerous disjointed and discordant fragments into one harmonious whole. Out of the scattered sands of the desert, so to speak, Islam wanted to build up the edifice of a nation, strong and solid. This the tribes could not understand. They could not appreciate the value of a central public treasury for purposes of nation-building, and hence their objection to the payment of Zakāt. Taking advantage of the general confusion, they refused to pay this tax. But, on the other hand, Abū Bakr was particularly strict on this point. National unity, national solidarity was his foremost concern, and the refusal to pay up taxes, if allowed unchecked, was bound to dismantle the whole of the fabric to pieces. The safety of Islam as a faith was bound up with that of the Muslims as a nation. Hence the Caliph's resolve to suppress this movement of non-payment of taxes at all costs. He issued an ultimatum to all such tribes as had withheld Zakāt that war would be declared against them unless they duly paid up. Refusal was tantamount to revolt. There were thus three different causes

that contributed to the general confusion at the Prophet's death. Firstly, there were those who were the dupes of the false Prophets. Secondly, those who objected only to payment of taxes into the central treasury, and as such were confused with the rebels. Thirdly, there were those who were true to Islam but cut off from Muslims, and not possessing the strength to fight the insurgents, they remained practically neutral.

The Defence of  
Medina.

Such was the state of Arabia when Abū Bakr took the reins of government in his hand. Hemmed in by difficulties and dangers, he yet stood undaunted and sent out the best of his men on the Syrian expedition in obedience to the orders of the Prophet. To deplete Medīna of all troops and thus leave it defenceless at such a critical time may look unstatesmanlike. Nevertheless, the bold action brought the Caliph's extraordinary force of conviction into the most prominent relief. Their leader's example could not but inspire the Muslims with daring, and the handful left behind undertook the defence of the capital. All man-power available in Medīna and its suburbs was mobilized, and all the approaches to the capital were carefully guarded day and night. Ṭulaiḥa, one of the false prophets, sent his brother to rouse the Beduin tribes to the north of Medīna. A large army was raised, but these people were neither hostile to



Islam nor did they mean to fight for Ṭulaiḥa. They had their own axe to grind. Sending a deputation to the Caliph, they requested that they might be exempted from payment of the Zakāt. The Medinites considered this as a godsend, and many were of opinion that under the circumstances it would be wise to grant their demands. Abū Bakr was, however, more far-sighted. He could see the far-reaching and disastrous effect of yielding on this point. Exception in one case would open the door for similar demands from other quarters, and Islam would ultimately lose hold on the whole of the peninsula. Moreover, payment of Zakāt was a most imperative injunction of the Qur'ān, and it was not for a Caliph to wave an obligation imposed by God. Hence unmoved by all considerations of policy, Abū Bakr stuck to his resolution in the face of war clouds on all sides. "If even so much as a string to tie a camel with is withheld from Zakāt," he replied, "they shall have war." This resolute refusal rendered the plight of Medīna all the more critical. "The Caliph had all the Muslims summoned and told them to be on their guard every minute. Any time the town might be stormed. Alī, Zubair and Ṭalḥa were put in command of the garrison.

Rebel attack on  
Medina repulsed.

The insurgents gathered together and encamped at a place called Dhul-

Qaṣṣa. After three days, they advanced on Medīna. The Medīna advance guards at once sent word to the town, and immediately the Muslims were on the march to meet the invaders. The Beduins were hardly prepared for such a reception. They were under the impression that Medīna was absolutely defenceless, the troops having been despatched to Syria. Thus confronted with a bold front, they turned their backs. The Muslims kept on the pursuit some distance and then returned. During the night, however, Abū Bakr got his men together, and early in the morning, while it was yet dark, fell upon the Beduins again. Not able to resist the onslaught, they took to flight. The Caliph, after stationing a detachment at Dhul-Qaṣṣa, returned to the Capital. This encounter had a great moral effect. The Muslims took heart and the Beduins had a most salutary lesson. The central government at Medīna, they now perceived, was strong enough to curb any insurrection, notwithstanding the absence of regular troops on the Syrian expedition. This went a long way to restore the prestige of Medīna, with the result that Zakāt money came pouring in from several quarters. Rebels and pretenders lost their spirit. This was all due to the unshakeable rock of faith on which Abū Bakr took his stand. To him is due the credit of piloting the bark of Islam to a

haven of safety in such foul and stormy weather.

In the meanwhile, Usāma returned from his Syrian expedition. The Caliph put him in charge of the defence of Medīna and himself marched at the head of a small army to Rabdha<sup>1</sup> which was now the rendezvous of the rebels. Being defeated, they fled and joined the forces of Ṭulaiḥa.

Despatch of expeditions to different quarters.

Abū Bakr now embarked on the extermination of the insurrection, root and branch. Dividing the army into eleven battalions and putting each under the command of a tried veteran, he directed the campaign simultaneously on various fronts. Khālīd-bin-Walīd was deputed to march first against Ṭulaiḥa and then against Mālīk-bin-Nuwaira; 'Ikrama-bin-Abī-Jahl was sent against Musailma; Shurahbīl was to reinforce 'Ikrama; and Muhājir-bin-Abī-Umayya was to invade Yemen and Ḥadzramaut. One battalion was despatched to keep guard on the Syrian frontier; two were sent out to suppress the rising in 'Ammān and Mahra; one was required to curb the tribe of Qūzā'a, and yet another to fight the Banī Salīm and Hawāzin. Upon himself Abū Bakr undertook the duties of generalissimo with Medīna for his base, from where he watched and directed the course of action. He also sent a proclamation

<sup>1</sup> A place about three days' journey from Medīna.

to his officers as well as to the tribes, directing the former that they must be moderate and kindly in their dealings with the latter, that before engaging in action they must first invite the belligerent tribe to Islam, must desist from fighting, should the tribe concerned accept their invitation, and that in case of refusal alone they were to resort to fighting. The usual call to prayer, the instructions continued, was to be considered sufficient evidence that a particular tribe was Muslim.

Object of expeditions.

It must be clearly understood that the object of these campaigns was no more than the suppression of rebellion. It is legitimately open to every government to punish rebels, to execute their ring-leaders and, if necessary, to declare war on them. But over and above this, there were several other reasons that called for action. In the first place, these rebels had wantonly shed the blood of peaceful Muslim citizens every here and there, causing disorder and disturbance. Again, they were out to extirpate the rule of Islam. The slightest leniency would have added enormously to the fury of the conflagration. And yet again, in the midst of these rebel tribes there were clans that were loyal to the Government but were cut off from intercourse with Medīna. Even in such far-off parts as

Hadzramaut and Bahrain, the loyalists were there side by side with the rebels. In several places, if one clan of a tribe had risen in revolt, there was another that refused to join hands with the rebels. Under these circumstances, the Caliph's proclamation that before starting the operation, it must be ascertained whether or not the particular tribe was Muslim, was perfectly justified, and must on no account be considered as anything in the form of conversion by force. As a matter of fact, it was indispensable that such a notice should have been broadcast both among the officers and the tribes in order to discriminate between the rebels and the loyalists. It was just a precaution, lest, seeing a tribe in revolt, all its component clans be mistaken as rebels and dealt with as such. And to extinguish the fire of revolt was the paramount call of the moment, but for which it would have been a matter of days for the rebels to reduce the power of Islam in Arabia to ashes.

**Khālid defeats  
Tulaiha.**

First of all, let us follow Khālid on his expedition against Tulaiha—Khālid at once a soldier and a general whose peer it is difficult for the history of heroism to produce. At the head of his men, he marched against Tulaiha who had now been joined by the tribe of Ghaṭfān under its chief 'Uyaina. Some

people of the tribe of Banī-Ṭay had also made common cause with him. Khālīd's negotiations, however, succeeded in winning over the Banī-Ṭay to the side of Islam, whereas his army defeated Ṭulaiḥa on the field of Buzākha. 'Uyaina was taken prisoner and brought to Medīna where he declared his repentance. Ṭulaiḥa escaped to Syria. Khālīd encamped here for some time and established peace. He forgave the Banī-Asad but punished those who were guilty of murder. The tribes that had been cut off from the main body of Islam owing to the revolt of Ṭulaiḥa also rejoined the forces of Islam.

Malik bin Nuwaira. Having suppressed Ṭulaiḥa, Khālīd next advanced against the Banī Tamīm. To this tribe belonged the clan, Banī Yarbū', which had, under its chief Mālik-bin-Nuwaira, joined hands with Sajāḥ, the false prophetess. The rest of the clans of Banī-Tamīm one by one offered their loyalty to Khālīd. Bani-Yarbū' were the only clan that kept away. Khālīd attacked them but found that they hastily decamped. Some Muslims were of opinion that they should be left alone, but Khālīd gave them a chase and took several of them prisoners, Mālik-bin-Nuwaira being one of the captives. Through misunderstanding of an order of Khālīd, some of these prisoners including Mālik were put to the

sword. A complaint against this was made to Abū Bakr who summoned Khālid for trial. When, however, the whole matter came to light, he was found not guilty and acquitted.

**Khalid defeats Musailma.** After restoring peace and order in this part, Khālid was instructed

by the Caliph to march against Musailma. This expedition had originally been entrusted to the command of 'Ikrama and Shuraḥbīl, but Musailma's hosts far out-numbered the Muslim troops. 'Ikrama acted rashly and resorted to a hasty attack. The result was that he suffered a defeat. Consequently the victorious troops of Khālid were now ordered to proceed against Musailma, while 'Ikrama was ordered to 'Ammān. Musailma had a large army of sixty thousand strong, and Khālid had a comparatively much smaller one, but the deficiency in numbers was made up by the strength of faith of the Muslim troops. A hot battle was fought at Yamāma—one of the most important battles in the history of Islam. Much valour was displayed on both sides. Several times were the Muslims repulsed, but every time they fell back, they hurled on with re-animated spirits. Musailma's troops were at length put to flight. They took refuge in a garden with a high rampart. This stronghold was, however, instantaneously stormed and won. One of the Muslim soldiers, Barā-bin-Mālik,

displayed remarkable valour on this occasion. He asked his comrades to lift him up, and thus he scaled up to the top of the rampart, and without hesitation jumped down into the garden among the surging masses of the enemy, and with the help of his sword cut his way through them and rushed right to the gate of the garden and flung it wide open. Musailma was killed by a Negro slave, Wahshī by name, and his army took to flight. In all, seven thousand Muslims fell in this battle, including a large number of those who had committed the whole of the Qur'ān to memory. Loss in human life on the other side was much greater. The Banī-Ḥanīfa surrendered, and when a deputation from that tribe visited Medīna to pay homage to Abū Bakr, the Caliph was curious to know what the teachings were that Musailma had given them. On their reciting a few sentences, he expressed his astonishment how at all they accepted such nonsense.

• •  
Bahrain rebel-  
lion crushed.

While Khālid scored victory on this front, putting down insurrection at its strongest centre, the rest of the expeditions of Muslim troops in other parts of the country met with similar success. Bahrain was another such part. Shortly after the news of the Prophet's death reached Bahrain, the Muslim governor of



the province, Mundhir, also died. This gave rise to disorder. One of the tribes, Banī-ʿAbdul Qais, stuck to Islam, but the other, Banī Bakr, renounced the faith and rose in open revolt. A battle ensued between these two tribes. The Banī-Bakr asked for help from Persia, and the Banī-ʿAbdul Qais from Medīna. A contingent of Muslim soldiers was despatched under the command of ʿAlā-bin-Alḥadzramī to their assistance. The combined forces of Banī Bakr and the Persians were defeated. They took shelter within a fort but were scattered by the Muslims. Thus was Bahrain totally cleared of rebellion.

ʿAmman and  
Mahra cleared of  
rebels.

Insurrections at two other places, ʿAmmān and Mahra, were likewise crushed. This expedition was led by Ḥudhaifa. ʿIkrama after his reverse at the hands of Musailma was also sent to Ḥudhaifa's help. At ʿAmmān a certain man, Laqīt-bin-Mālik, had laid claim to the prophethood and had raised a large army at Dabā, the capital of the province. The Muslim army was victorious. Leaving Ḥudhaifa at ʿAmmān, ʿIkrama proceeded against Mahra, and restored peace and order there.

Yemen and Had-  
zramaut restored.

Ziyād-i-bin-Labīd was the collector of Zakāt for Ḥadzramaut and Kinda. At the Prophet's death, one Ash'ath-bin-Qais turned apostate along with his tribe, and

raised his standard of revolt at Ḥadzramaut. Ziyād rallied the loyal tribes and gave him a battle, but was defeated and fled to Medīna. From there, he was sent back assisted by Muhājir, but no decisive battle took place. 'Ikrama who had in the meantime put down insurrections at 'Ammān and Mahra was consequently sent to Ḥadzramaut to reinforce the Muslim troops. Ash-'ath was besieged and taken prisoner. He was brought to Medina where he embraced Islam. In the meanwhile, the province of Yemen had also been purged of rebellion.

Conflict with the  
Roman Empire and  
Persia.

Within a year, Abū Bakr crushed all the forces of disorder and revolt in the territory which had, during the Prophet's life-time, come under the sway of Islam. Having set his own house in order, the Caliph next addressed himself to the strengthening of the Persian and Syrian frontiers. This gave rise to the long chain of wars that ended, during the reign of 'Umar, in the subjugation of the Roman and Persian Empires by the Muslims. In the rebellion of Baḥrain, it will be recollected, the rebels sought the help of Persia which actually sent its forces against the Muslims. This was an act of open hostility and a declaration of war against the Caliphate. This is a point that must be specially borne in mind ; for this, in fact, was the

starting point of the war against Persia. It was Persia that assumed an aggressive attitude by penetrating into the territory of Islam and actively helping the rebels against the Government of Islam. Furthermore, from the side of Mesopotamia where Persian influence was strong, there was another incursion into Arabia by one Sajāḥ who pretended to be a prophetess. She was actually out on an expedition against Medīna, the Capital of Islam, and only turned back after coming so far as Yamāma in Central Arabia. It is unthinkable that a woman representing an insignificant tribe should have the audacity to march on the heart of Islam, unless instigated and backed up by its powerful neighbour. Anyway, the fact that a tribe on the Persian border and under Persian influence should invade Arabia is enough to incriminate Persia of another act of grave aggression. It was but natural under these circumstances, that the Government of Islam should anticipate danger on the Persian border, and in self-defence, address itself to strengthening it. Consequently the first expeditions were all confined to the Arab colonies to the West of the river Euphrates. As a matter of fact, the Muslims would have been perfectly justified even if they had pushed forward to Mesopotamia. The rules of morality as well as international law would have been on their side. War had actually

been declared against them, and, what is more, Persian troops had already encroached upon Arabia to help the insurgents. It would have been suicidal on the part of the Muslims to sit still. Historians who have accused Abū Bakr of deliberately provoking hostilities with the neighbouring empires in order to keep the Arab tribes busy and divert their attention from internal disorders, have obviously ignored these hard facts of history. The explanation seems to have been prompted by the common obsession of a certain class of writers that Islam was propagated at the point of the sword. Not finding a single incident in the life of the Prophet, warranting a charge like this, they turned to the period of the Caliphs in quest of some material. There they saw wars waged with the neighbouring empires, and in their impatience somehow to strengthen their pre-conceived notion, jumped to the conclusion that these wars were inspired by a spirit of proselytism, forgetting that the initiative in all these wars was taken by the other side.

Insurrection  
called for fortifica-  
tion of frontiers.

A cursory glance at contemporary events in Arabia is enough to exonerate Abū Bakr of the charge that in waging these wars he was moved by his zeal of conversion or love of conquest. A most dangerous insurrection which threatened to engulf the very

existence of Islam had just been put down. It was but common foresight that the very first thing to do should be to keep under proper control all the forces of domestic disorder. And Abū Bakr had hardly enough of army to do it with. Now, it must be remembered that Abū Bakr never resorted to drastic measures against insurgents, measures which are adopted even to-day in the name of discipline and prestige, by the most civilized nations. When once order was restored, not a single individual was molested. Not a man was killed simply because he had taken part in the rebellion. Even the ringleaders were granted amnesty. Under such circumstances, it was the paramount duty of the Caliph to establish strong garrisons in the affected areas to prevent a relapse to disorder. The elements of trouble were still there and might burst out again at any moment. Demonstration of military power alone could hold them in check. To maintain peace and order, therefore, should have been the foremost anxiety of the Caliph and this could only be done by strong military posts scattered all over the land. How fantastic to allege that under conditions such as these when he wanted every available man for service at home, his expeditions on the frontiers of Arabia were inspired by a lust of loot or territorial extension ! The flames of a terrible insurrection had been just

brought under control, and to entertain such an idea just at this moment is absurd on the face of it. That he actually sent out his troops to strengthen the frontiers only shows the enormous extent of danger on those points. There was enough of danger at home, but, it seems, the danger from abroad was even greater, and required immediate action. It was thus not the so-called loot-lust of the Caliph but his far-sightedness that urged him to grapple without the least delay with this most threatening danger, even at the risk of ignoring the minor danger at home. And it speaks much for his statesmanship. Unless immediately met with and nipped in the bud, the tide of mischief on both the Persian and the Syrian frontiers must have engulfed Arabia once more, and plunged it into the chaos from which it had just been extricated, and on an extent beyond the power of the government of Islam to control.

Abu Bakr's  
motives in sending  
expeditions to  
frontiers.

The idea that the expeditions against Persia and the Roman Empire were intended to keep the Beduin tribes occupied with the lure of loot, thereby diverting their attention from fostering trouble at home, is a mere myth. It is inconceivable that men with such scant fidelity to the throne of Islam, should be entrusted with the most vital function of opposing two most mighty empires. Contemporary

history bears testimony to the fact that for a considerable period, the tribes that had participated in the insurrection were debarred from military services. A historian like Sir William Muir, by no means friendly in his attitude towards Islam, admits that in the beginning when these expeditions were launched, Abū Bakr forbade the enlistment of all those who had taken part in the rebellion. This ban continued all through his rule. The same historian records that while the Caliph was on his death-bed, word was brought from Muthannā, who was then in Mesopotamia, that the danger on the Persian frontier was on the increase, and, therefore, in order to raise additional forces to cope with the threatening situation permission should be given for enrolment of members of the tribes that had taken part in the rebellion. And yet, in the same breath it is contended that the Persian and Syrian campaigns were intended to lure away these rebel tribes from home politics! How at all could it be when the door of military service was shut against them? This clearly shows that the accusation is absolutely baseless. No doubt a time did come when the ban was removed and the door to military service was opened to these rebel tribes. But this was at a much later period when in view of the vast hosts put in the field by Persia and Rome, it became

necessary to proportionately multiply the forces of Islam. To judge of Abū Bakr's motives at the time of launching these expeditions by subsequent developments is certainly bad logic. The only permissible data on which any such judgment can be based would obviously be the events and conditions that preceded these expeditions, not those that followed as a later development, mostly during the reign of the second Caliph.

The strength of  
the Caliphate as  
compared with the  
two Empires.

In order to discover the true causes that led to these wars we must view them in the context of the state of things obtaining at the time. A cursory glance at historical facts would show that the Arabs could not dare invade two such mighty empires as Persia and Rome. The Caliph could not dream of such a thing. Persia and Rome were far too formidable and their very name inspired terror into the heart of an Arab. The power of Arabia was comparatively insignificant. Several parts of the peninsula were under the sway of one or other of these neighbouring kingdoms. Persia held sway over a vast tract to the east, whereas the northern part was under the domination of Rome. Then there was a huge force at the disposal of each, equipped with all sorts of weapons of offence and defence, with all the resources of organisation and a rich treasury at the back. Arabia, on the other



hand, had neither men nor money to cope with an expedition so stupendous. It had just emerged from a most terrible internecine warfare. The erstwhile rebel population could hardly be trusted to stand loyal and steadfast by their country in its hour of need. There was no regular army worth the name, no money, no munitions. Is it conceivable that situated as the government of Islam was, it could have wantonly set out on a campaign of aggression against two such formidable foes at one and the same time? Here is food for thought for all impartial students of the history of Islam. Another equally baseless accusation against Abū Bakr is that in undertaking the campaigns against Persia and Syria he was inspired by a fanatic fervour for proselytism. The Arabs were too weak to think of subduing two such mighty empires and to impose their faith on them. On the other hand, they themselves were in danger of being crushed any moment by these powerful neighbours.

Aggression on the  
enemy's part.

What after all, then, was the motive that urged Abū Bakr to resort to a course fraught with such danger? The foremost thing to receive his attention after having quelled the insurrection, should have been to address himself to internal management and organization of administration. Rather than set his own house in

order, what made him rush to the frontiers? As already stated, it was the peril of utter extermination of the power of Islam, standing out so prominently in those quarters. The neighbouring empires were fast fomenting trouble on the frontiers which might any day have enveloped the whole of the peninsula in a conflagration far more serious than the one just subdued. The Caliph's discerning eye perceived the danger, and having perceived it met it with the quickness and courage characteristic of Islam in its palmy days. To strengthen and fortify the frontier, whether in the physical or spiritual sense, is a most important part of the teachings of Islam. This was the guiding principle of the life of the Prophet as well as of his immediate disciples who had imbibed the spirit of the message of Islam from the Messenger direct. As a matter of fact, it is due, among other causes, mainly to the neglect of this golden rule of national security that the various Muslim powers of this age have fallen a prey to foreign machinations and greed. A strong frontier is the very first requisite of a stable and secure government. Consequently, no sooner was the insurrection put down than Abū Bakr concentrated his attention on this most vital problem. Notwithstanding his realization of the great risk he was running in venturing upon an undertaking so hazardous, notwithstanding the

fact that he had no well-organized regular army, notwithstanding all the difficulties and dangers with which this enterprise was beset, he cared not a bit when the call of duty came clear and imperative, and with fearless pluck plunged his ill-quipped, ill-disciplined scanty forces against a mighty foe. How characteristically Islamic! Whereas, on the one hand, the Muslims were scrupulous to a degree never to encroach upon others' rights, they were, on the other, possessed of a sense of duty so high as to face, if needed, the whole world single-handed. They would as readily plunge into flames of fire as they would dash to a pleasant green meadow, should that be the dictate of duty. They rushed to where the swords and spears fell thick and fast as they would to a regal throne. True, they never took the initiative, but when once the enemy transgressed upon their rights or violated their honour, they were not slow to take up the gauntlet, even though they had to oppose the whole world. So it was that notwithstanding their own weakness and the enormous strength of Persia and Rome, they promptly and simultaneously took to arms against both, when they perceived that they were bent on mischief. Sir William Muir's words in this connection are noteworthy: "No sooner was apostasy put down than, first in Chaldea and then in Syria,

collision with wild border tribes kindled the fire of foreign war". (*The Caliphate*, P. 42).

Let it be remembered therefore, that in the Persian and Syrian wars, the Muslims were by no means the aggressors. All they wanted was to fortify their own frontiers and when they did so, Persia and the Roman Empire jumped in. To quote the same historian again: "Chaldæa and southern Syria belong properly to Arabia. The tribes inhabiting this region, partly heathen but chiefly (at least in name) Christian, formed an integral part of the Arab race and as such fell within the immediate scope of the New Dispensation. When, however, these came into collision with the Muslim columns on the frontier, they were supported by their respective sovereigns,—the western by the Kaisar, and the eastern by the Chosroes. Thus the struggle widened, and Islam was brought presently face to face in mortal conflict with the two great powers of the East and of the West." (*The Caliphate*, P. 46.)

It is thus obvious that the Caliphate of Islam acted up to the true spirit of Islamic teachings. It did not take the initiative in these hostilities. When, however, it took in hand certain defensive measures and mobilized forces such as it had on its own frontier, the neighbouring powers of Persia and Rome, in the intoxication of their

military strength, made it a pretext and rushed to grapple with the Muslims.

Trouble in Arabia  
was fomented by  
Persia and Rome.

History has not preserved the details of how these wars originated, but there are on record events which throw light on the question. When Bahrain rose in revolt against the central authority of Islam, Persia openly sent reinforcements to help the insurgents. A Christian woman, Sajāh, at the head of Christian tribes, marched from her home on the frontier of Persia, against Medīna, the capital of Islam, and traversed the country right up to the central part. Towards the north, in the territory under the influence of the Christian empire of Rome, Ṭulaiḥa raised his standard of revolt. These are some clear indications that the insurrection in the several parts of the peninsula was inspired and fanned by both Persia and Rome. These parts were either those immediately on the borders adjoining these two powers or those under their direct influence. Again, Persia exercised a very wide influence over the province of Yemen, another area affected by the general revolt. It is thus likely that over and above the open assistance which Persia and the Roman Empire rendered to the insurgents, the insurrection itself was due to their secret machinations. The Roman Empire like some modern states was

particularly a past-master in the art of wire-pulling from behind the scenes. It seems, therefore, that these two neighbours did all they could to foment trouble in the various provinces of Arabia that were in any way in contact with them. To safeguard against a repetition of the mischief, the Muslim Government was constrained to resort to military operations on the frontiers. And when it did this, the Persian and the Roman empires committed open acts of hostility under the impression that they would thus inspire awe into the hearts of the Arabs. But Islam had brought about a change over Arabia, and the two empires had to answer for the aggression.

It is from such stray events met with in the pages of history that we can trace the causes of these wars. Early historians were not particular about going into the why and wherefore of things. They were just chroniclers of events, beyond which they worried little to go. To ascertain the underlying causes, we must piece together those various events and draw our own conclusions. This is exactly how we are able to tell the causes of the various wars during the Prophet's life-time, the only advantage in this case being that these events have been recorded and handed down to us in greater detail. The period of the early Caliphate considered comparatively far less im-

portant, is not characterised by the same profusion of narration, and most important episodes have often received but a brief reference,—a fact admitted by recent historians as well. Nevertheless, the guiding rule to get to the root causes of things is the same, *viz.*, reading between the apparently scattered events and discovering the common thread running through all. The accuracy or otherwise of the conclusion must obviously depend on that of the events selected as data for investigation. And with this rule in view, we can safely vouch for the accuracy of the conclusions drawn above as regards the causes of the Persian and Syrian campaigns of the Muslims. The events that we have drawn upon are all events of unimpeachable historic authenticity.

Muthanna's Expedition 12 A. H.  
633 A. D.

We will now take up the course of the expedition which brought about a clash with Persia. In the suppression of insurrection in the province of Bahrain, Muthannā-bin-Ḥārith Shaibānī had rendered much assistance. The next that we hear of him is that he advanced northward along the coast of the Persian Gulf. Now, these are apparently two disconnected events? To find out the connecting link we must call in the aid of a third event. Elsewhere we have been told that the Persians had sent reinforcements

to the tribe of Banī-Bakr during the Baḥrain insurrection. Hence, it seems most likely that this expedition by Muthannā towards the north was undertaken to clear that territory of the insurgents and their allies, the Persians. This was the territory where, besides several other tribes, dwelt Muthannā's own tribe as well. All these tribes were smarting under the constant high-handedness and oppression of the Persians. Consequently, Muthannā, entering into alliance with the rest of the aggrieved tribes, raised an army 8,000 strong. This, however, was too small a force as compared with the hosts of the Persian Empire. Thus it was that Abū Bakr ordered his

Khalid reinforces  
Muthanna and  
assumes command. famous general, Khālīd, who had by now suppressed the revolt of

Musailma, to proceed immediately to Ubulla, a place somewhere near modern Baṣra, to reinforce Muthannā, sending instructions at the same time to the latter to entrust the chief command to Khālīd. The first encounter between the Muslim and the Persian forces took place at a place, Hafīr, some fifty miles to the south of Ubulla, almost on the border of Persia. The Persians were routed. This battle is known as *Dhāt-us-salāsīl*, i.e., the battle of the chains, from the fact that the Persian soldiers fastened themselves to one another by means of chains.



Hira taken.

Giving the enemy battle after battle, Khālīd defeated them in another pitched battle at Ullais, and marched on along the western bank of the Euphrates, right up to Hira, near modern Kūfa. All the territory to the west of the river which, though usurped by the Persians, was inhabited by purely Arab tribes, was subjugated and annexed to the mother country. The Persian forces were driven to Mesopotamia to the east of the river. Hira, the capital of a tributary state of that name under Persia, was also besieged, and the Christian government of the place soon surrendered, entering into a treaty with the Muslims stipulating to pay tribute to Arabia.

Jizya and charge  
of loot.

The tribute taken from the Christians of Hira was termed *Jizya*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The word *jizya* is derived from *jasū* which means *compensation*. This was a tax levied on non-Muslim subjects under the rule of Islam, so called because it was supposed to be a recompense for the protection of life and property which that rule guaranteed them. Muslim subjects were exempt from this tax in consideration of military service which was compulsory in their case. As a matter of fact they too were made to pay for that protection but only in a different form. They bore the hardships of a military life, they fought the country's battles, they laid down their lives in defence of the country. Non-Muslims were exempt from all this, and in lieu of this they contributed their share in the shape of money. It is obvious which of the two alternatives is the easier. In countries where conscription is the law to-day, there would certainly be many who would be glad to buy their exemption from military service so cheap, paying a small amount as a tax. It must be remembered furthermore, that the tax was not indiscriminately charged to every one of the non-Muslim subjects. Males under twenty and above fifty, all females, those suffering from

and this was the first Jizya levied in the history of Islam. In addition to the fixed amount of tribute agreed upon, the Hirites also offered presents. These the Caliph accepted but deducted their price from the amount of Jizya. How presumptuous in the face of such noble instances to impute to the Muslims such base motives as the lust of loot. No doubt, when an army was defeated in open battle, their stocks of provisions and other belongings fell into the hands of the victorious Muslims. But this is not loot. Such spoils of war are considered in this twentieth century of civilization as perfectly lawful prize for the victorious army. The Muslims did no more than avail themselves of such prize of war, a thing sanctioned by all the ancient and modern canons of civilised warfare. The question, however, remains whether the prospects of these spoils, perfectly legitimate in themselves, were at all a factor in impelling the Muslims to undertake these wars. Nothing could be further from their hearts. Who, <sup>after</sup> all, were the men responsible for launching forth the wars? Why, men like Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Now if they were really actuated by the motives ascribed to them, they should have been the first to take the lion's share some chronic disease, the blind and the poor, were all exempt. As a matter of fact, the Muslims had also to pay a tax in addition under the name of *sakūt*, and this was much heavier than *jizya*, as it was levied at the rate of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on all savings annually.

of the spoils of war to themselves. But it is a fact of history that they never utilized such acquisitions for personal aggrandizement. Nay, more. When during the reign of 'Umar, Persia and Syria fell before Muslim arms and large quantities of such spoils, money, goods, precious stones, came pouring into the Muslims' hands, the noble Caliph could not restrain his tears. "I fear," said he, actually weeping, "that these appertenances of an ease-loving life may not bring ruin." A man with a heart so free of all love of filthy lucre could not enter upon a day's fighting for such a sordid thing as loot. If the Muslims were out for loot as alleged, they should have behaved as such in the lands they conquered. But history tells a different tale. Their treatment was marked by exemplary moderation and magnanimity, so much so that in Syria, the Christian population preferred Muslim rule to that of their own co-religionists, and so the fire-worshipping population of Persia looked upon the Muslims as their deliverers from the yoke of their own kith and kin. Even Sir William Muir has been constrained to admit this in his "Caliphate":

"The people of Syria, too, apart from the religious persecution to which they had been subjected, suffered from increased taxation, and in consequence remained passive spectators of

the invasion of their country, hoping more, indeed, from an occupation by the Arabs, who abstained from pillage, and whose rule was mild and tolerant, than from the continuance of *status quo*." (P. 65).

What is more, side by side with the Muslim soldiers and under the flag of Islam, could also be seen good many Christian soldiers fighting against Persia. No writer has ever made the suggestion that they were also out for loot.

Conquest of  
Anbar and 'Ain-ut-  
tamr.

From Hira, Khālid advanced northward till he reached Anbār, a place on the bank of the Euphrates, some eight miles from Babel. There he laid siege to the fort and captured it. Some three stages further was 'Ain-ut-Tamr, the centre of the mischief of Banī Taghlab. It was from here that Sajāh, the female pretender to prophethood, had set out at the head of the Banī Taghlab to attack Medīna. It was only natural that Khālid should have turned to such a stronghold of mischief. This he did and in no time captured the place. Khālid was quite justified in pushing his campaign so far and clearing the whole of the territory to the west of the Euphrates. With any thing short of this, a half-measure, Arabia could not be secure from danger in that quarter. And considering that hostilities against Arabia had actually been hatched, and launched from there under the leadership of

Sajāh, it was necessary that the enemy should have been subjugated here. The battle of 'Ain-ut-Tamr was also won by the Muslims, and Khālid encamped here for some time.

*Expedition on the  
Northern Frontier.*

Let us now turn to the Syrian frontier. Danger from the Persian frontier had arisen after the Prophet's death, but on the frontier of Syria, a skirmish between Muslims and the Chief of Buṣrā had taken place much earlier, in the year 8. A.H., in the Prophet's own life-time. Again, when intelligence was brought to the Prophet as regards the military preparations of the northern tribes, he had in person led an expedition of 30,000 strong and marched as far as Tabūk. There being no enemy troops, however, the Prophet had returned without striking a blow. This was in the year 9 A.H. Yet again, only a couple of days before his death, the Prophet had ordered another expedition towards the Syrian frontier under the command of Usāma. All these events show that the Christian tribes on the Syrian frontier and Heraclius himself were far more inimically disposed towards Arabia than the Persians were. And an invasion of Arabia from this quarter was much easier than from the Persian frontier. Medīna was comparatively far nearer the Syrian frontier, and besides, the route was also good. There are good many

reasons to believe that the Muslims apprehended far more danger from the Syrian frontier. Thus 'Umar on one occasion in the Holy Prophet's life, when a certain man said that a great calamity had come, inquired anxiously, "Have the Ghassanides come?" The Ghassanides were a Christian tribe in the north of Arabia on the Syrian border. The Prophet, therefore, was ever on his guard against that quarter and thrice in his own life-time had sent or ordered expeditions thither. After the Prophet's death the whole of Arabia was plunged into anarchy, and the crisis called for the strongest military force. Nevertheless, the army of Usāma was not detained for a day and was ordered to proceed to the Syrian frontier. This also throws light on the great danger that threatened Arabia from that quarter, danger far greater than the wide-spread insurrection at home. On Usāma's return when expeditions were despatched to various parts of Arabia, one was again sent to the Syrian frontier under the command of Khālid-bin-Sa'id. Abū Bakr's instructions to this general are particularly noteworthy. He was ordered not to attack the enemy but to repulse any attacks made on him. It has already been discussed at length that the petty power of Arabia could not think of invading the mighty Roman Empire, especially at a time when it was itself hemmed in with difficul-

ties on all sides. It was only a defensive campaign, the commander having strict orders under no circumstances to strike the first blow. The government of Heraclius, however, was on the look-out for an opportunity, and the crisis created by the general revolt afforded that opportunity. Now, thought the enemy, was the time to strike and strike hard. Notwithstanding the fact that Khālīd-bin-Sa'īd was quietly encamped and had not unsheathed his sword, the Romans roused a Beduin tribe against Muslims, at the same time starting their own manœuvres for an attack. The hands of Abū Bakr were thus forced by the aggressiveness of the adversary to declare war against the Roman Empire, and further reinforcements were consequently forthwith hurried to the Syrian frontier.

The Battle of  
Ajnadain, 13 A. H.  
634 A. D.

There prevails some confusion as to the exact year of the Syrian warfare. It seems that the final decision to declare war was taken about the beginning of A.H. 13. The Muslim army advanced on Palestine in three or four divisions. Instructions were also issued to Khālīd-bin-Walīd who was at the time lying encamped at 'Ain-ut-Tamr on the Persian frontier at once to proceed to the help of Khālīd-bin-Sa'īd. Leaving Muthannā in charge of the Persian frontier with half the army, Khālīd

accordingly marched to Syria with the other half. The total strength of the Muslim army was forty thousand while the hosts of the Roman Empire numbered two hundred and forty thousands. The two armies met at Ajnādāin. Three thousand Muslims fell on the field but they won the day. This was on the 28th Jumādī, I 13 A.H. Routed here, Heraclius fled to Antāqiya (Antioch), whereas the Muslim General, Khālīd, having won the battle marched straight on to Damascus and laid siege to that historic town. But this episode we must leave to the Caliphate of 'Umar, to which period it properly belongs. The news of the victory of Ajnādāin reached Medīna just at the time when Abū Bakr was in the last agonies of death.

**Abu Bakr's illness and death**  
**Jumadi II, 13 A.H.**  
**Aug. 634 A.D.**

It was on the 7th Jumādī II, 13 .A.H. that Abū Bakr fell ill. When the disease took a serious turn, he sent for prominent Muslims and consulted them as to a suitable successor. All eyes turned to 'Umar, just as, at the Prophet's death all had turned to Abū Bakr. Every one considered him to be the right man for the exalted office. Throughout his reign, Abū Bakr had been conducting state affairs in consultation with 'Umar. He consulted first 'Abdur-Raḥmān-bin-'Auf, then 'Uthmān. Both favoured 'Umar. Thereafter he asked the opinions of Sa'id-bin-Zaid, Usaid bin Hudzair and other



Muhājirīn (Emigrants) and Anṣār (Helpers). The choice of all fell on 'Umar. There were some who feared that by temperament 'Umar was a bit harsh. Responsibility of office, reassured the dying Caliph, would soften him down. Thus with the consultation of Muslims, Abū Bakr nominated 'Umar as his successor, and passed away on Tuesday 22nd Jumādī II 13 A.H. (23rd Aug. 634 A.D.) after a fortnight's illness, and was buried beside the Holy Prophet. Reposing side by side with his beloved Master, the devoted companionship which he so pre-eminently bore the Prophet in life-time was now continued after death. The period of his Caliphate was a little over two years, but immense work had been done during this short time.

**Simplicity of his life.** Abū Bakr was an embodiment of simplicity. Raised to kingship, he retained the same simplicity of life, the same simple dress, the same simple house, the same simple food. To him no work, however humble, was beneath his dignity. He did his own work when a Caliph just as before holding that high position. Nay, he even did all sorts of little offices to others. Like his great Master, the Prophet, earthly kingship had wrought not the slightest change in him. If the Prophet set the high example of combining the life of a hermit with the position of a king, even

so did he, the greatest of his disciples and the dearest of his companions, faithfully walk in his footsteps. When elected Caliph, the very next day he was seen wending his way to the market with his merchandise. 'Umar chanced to meet him on the way and reminded him that on his shoulders lay the onerous burden of kingship, and as such it was not possible for him to carry on business pursuits along with state affairs. To maintain his family, replied the Caliph, he must work. The companions held a consultation and calculating his usual domestic expenses settled an annual allowance of 2,500 dirhams on him, which was subsequently raised to about 500 dirhams a month. At the time of death, he had in his possession an old sheet of cloth and a camel, the property of *Baitulmāl*, i.e., the public treasury. These he returned to his successor, 'Umar. As regards the winding sheet to cover his corpse, he advised that an old piece of cloth, duly washed up, would do. The living, he said, stood in greater need of a new piece than the dead. As regards his sincerity of conviction and faith in the Prophet, a historian like Sir William Muir advances these as an argument in support of the Prophet's sincerity: "Had Muhammad begun his career a conscious impostor, he never could have won the faith and friendship of a man who was not only sagacious and wise, but throughout his life

simple, consistent and sincere," (The Caliphate, p., 81). This testimony of a historian who makes no secret of his bias against Islam, with regard to the sincerity and devotion of Abū Bakr, should suffice to seal the lips of those Muslims who for very petty things find fault with that over-towering personality. The hand of God manifested itself in the Caliph's support just as it had been manifested in the case of the Holy Prophet, and through his instrumentality was Islam, after it seemed to have got submerged under the terrible upheaval on the Prophet's death, brought back to full life and vigour. As Muir says: "After Muḥammad himself, there is no one to whom the faith is more beholden."—(The Caliphate, p. 81). Abū Bakr's love of God and His Prophet was the deepest that was ever cherished by a disciple towards his Master. Consumed as his whole being was in Divine love, worldly power and pelf had not the least charm or attraction for him. His piety and devotion, his simplicity of life, his sublimity of morals, his iron determination, his unflagging perseverance and above all his unshakable faith were the many qualities that have won him a place in Islam only second to that of the Holy Prophet.

The collection of the Qur-an. During the two years and a quarter of Abū Bakr's reign, Islam was once more restored to life. The fire of

insurrection all over Arabia was extinguished and the power of Islam firmly re established. Nay, a new vigour was instilled into it ; so that when the time came, it was able to overthrow at one blow two of the mightiest empires of the day. But this is only one side of the picture, one phase of the great achievements of the Caliph. He did immense service to the great cause in several other directions. It was in his short reign that the collection of the Holy Qur'an was brought about. This expression—the collection of the Qur'an—is often misunderstood. It signifies no more than this, that all those manuscripts which during the life-time of the Holy Prophet had been dictated to amanuenses from time to time as the verses were revealed, were brought together into one volume, in the order in which the Holy Prophet had personally directed them to be inserted. The practice with the Prophet was that whenever a verse or a chapter was revealed, a double process was employed to preserve it. There were amanuenses always at hand who committed it to writing; there were also those who committed it to memory. Now it must be noted that the revelation of certain chapters extended over many years, as they were revealed piecemeal. Thus whenever a fresh revelation came which was to form part

of a previously revealed chapter, the Prophet while directing its commitment to writing and memory, would there and then also point out in what chapter and in what context of that chapter to insert it. Thus the whole of the Qur'ān was arranged and recited in the very order in which we find it in our hands. In this very order the Prophet recited the various chapters in his daily prayers. In this very order were they preserved in human memories. The order and arrangement was all done under the Prophet's own directions. The only thing left undone was that the stray manuscripts were not put into one volume. Nor could they be so put during the life-time of the Prophet when any time a fresh piece might be revealed and a rearrangement of the written pieces would accordingly become necessary. These pieces were taken down on various things—on palm leaves, on paper, or on leather. The work of collection could only be done after the Prophet's death when the Quran had been revealed in its entirety. Consequently, when in the battle of Yamāma, many of those Muslims who had the Qur'ān by heart met martyrdom, 'Umar reminded Abū Bakr that the time for such collection of the scattered pieces had come, so that if even all those who had committed the Qur'ān to memory should fall in battle,

the Qur'ān might still remain intact in the same order. This important work was at once taken in hand and entrusted to Zaid-bin-Thābit, the scribe who had taken down most of the Medīna chapters, and he collected all the material bearing these manuscripts and made them into one volume. This is all the term "collection of the Qur'ān" implies, and this is what was done in the reign of Abū Bakr. Later on during the time of 'Uthmān, when the empire of Islam spread far and wide, several authentic copies of this volume were made and sent out to the various centres of the empire, so that each may in that part serve as a standard version and as a reference for all subsequent copies that might be made, thus avoiding all chances of discrepancies in text or in writing creeping in. This was undoubtedly one of the greatest services to the cause of Islam, and shall ever be the basis of the unity of Islam—one book without the least variation for the whole Muslim world.

The collection of Zakat. The other most important achievement of Abū Bakr was the system of collecting Zakāt in the central national treasury. During the stormy days when pretenders had arisen in several parts of Arabia, some of the newly converted tribes took it into their heads, to take advantage of the general

disorder and refuse payment of Zakāt. They demanded, as the price of their keeping quiet, that they should be exempted from this compulsory tax. Even a strict and stern man like 'Umar counselled Abū Bakr to show leniency in view of the critical time. Refusal meant the estrangement of these tribes as well and throwing them into the arms of the rebels. The Caliph, however, resolutely rejected the proposal. It was a system of vital importance both to the solidarity and the stability of the power of Islam, and a compromise therefore was out of question. The slightest relaxation of this public duty would have meant, at that early stage, the disintegration of the power of Islam. Shorn of this central national fund, the Caliphate would have been reduced to a mere skeleton without either vitality or vigour, and a few more days would have seen the end of it. Abū Bakr saved the situation. Should so much as a single seed of grain be left unpaid, he replied, he would wage war against the defaulters and carry it on till it had been paid up. To how many of the Muslims of to-day has it ever struck that much of their present national disintegration is due to lack of this central Zakāt fund? With a strong national fund kept incessantly replenished by Zakāt from the pocket of every

Muslim man and woman of means, wonders can be achieved in a short time in the way of nation-building, such as the opening of schools, establishment of orphanages, poor houses, missions for the propagation of the faith, and so forth.

**Government by Counsel** The third most conspicuous service of Abū Bakr was the introduction, in all affairs of state, of the democratic system of taking counsel and arriving at decisions by the majority of votes. The procedure followed was that, first of all, reference was made to the Qur'ān for light and guidance for the matter in hand. In case, no explicit ruling bearing on that question was found there, reference was next made to what the Prophet had said or done. Failing to find light through that source as well, recourse was finally made to counsel to which all the prominent Companions were invited. The matter was thoroughly discussed and the line of action favoured by the majority of those present was ultimately adopted. This exactly was the principle according to which the Government of the country was conducted during the reign of 'Umar. Nevertheless, where a clear instruction could be had either on the authority of the Qur'ān or the Sunna, the matter was considered above dispute and settled accordingly even against popular opinion. The despatch of



the expedition to Syria under the command of Usāma is a case in point. Though most of the important Companions, in view of the threatening conditions at home, opposed this bold step, Abū Bakr over-ruled the opposition on the authority of the Prophet. An army, he argued, directed by the Prophet himself to proceed to Syria, could on no account be kept back. On the same principle, he refused to put a more experienced man in command ; for Usāma had been appointed by the Prophet himself and as such could not be removed. In the absence of any clear light, however, all affairs were decided by the majority of votes, and when once a decision was thus arrived at, the minority submitted to it as cheerfully as the majority.

Another equally momentous reform that gives to Abū Bakr an eminent position in history was the subordination of the status of kingship to the will of the people. The king was to be considered a member of the society just as a commoner. There were no privileges attached to that exalted position. For instance, the king was not the master but only the custodian of the public treasury. A civil list was fixed for him by others beyond which he could not draw a single penny for his personal use. The king was thus the servant of the

Position of the ruler.

people. This was a reform introduced centuries ago when the standard of world civilization was very low—a reform of which the most civilized nation of this twentieth century may justly be proud. Then again, Abū Bakr did not convert kingship into a personal property to descend in his own line. At the time of his death, he had sons in every way capable of occupying their father's position, but he selected 'Umar as the worthiest of all to fill that office, and did not consider his choice as final until he had consulted the Companions and obtained their confirmation. Yet again, the king was just as much under the law of the land as a man in the street. "The king can do no wrong" was not to be the Islamic law. The king was as much accountable for his deeds at the bar of the law of the land as a drawer of water or a hewer of wood. When on a visit to Mecca, the Caliph took a seat near the town hall and asked the people if any of them had any grievance against him or if he owed any one any thing. Furthermore, legislation was not placed in the hands of the king. First of all the Qur'an, then the Prophet's precept or practice, then the will of the people, such was the machinery that framed the law; and the law, not the king, was the supreme authority. In subordinating kingship to the law of the land and the law of the

land to the will of the people, Abu Bakr laid the foundation of a truly democratic government as also of liberty and equality in the truest sense of these words. To the misfortune of the community of Islam, however, this golden rule of government was abandoned after the reign of 'Alī, the fourth Caliph. Kingship again became private property. So also became the public treasury. Democracy gave way to despotism and from this began the disintegration and decay of the power of Islam.

Treatment of enemies. The list of Abū Bakr's multifarious reforms would be incomplete without mentioning those most humane rules which he laid down for the guidance of his army in its behaviour towards the enemy. Here are some specially emphasized :—

1. No old man, no child, no woman shall be slain.
2. No hermit shall be molested nor his place of worship damaged.
3. Corpses of the fallen shall not be mutilated or disfigured.
4. No fruit-bearing tree shall be cut down, no crops burned, no habitation devastated.
5. Treaty obligations with other faiths shall under all circumstances be honoured and fulfilled.

6. Those who surrender shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of a Muslim subject.

Strength of character.

Unique power of decision was another most brilliant trait in Abū Bakr's versatile personality, and his strength of character was most strikingly displayed in what is known in the history of Islam as the dispute of Fidk. When the Prophet passed away, his daughter, Fāṭima, sent word to Abū Bakr that the property known as Fidk and other property on which the Prophet in his life-time maintained himself, must be divided among his inheritors in accordance with the Islamic law, and that her share must be made over to her. To this the Caliph replied, quoting the Prophet's well-known saying that "Prophets do not leave anything to be inherited and that what they leave behind must go to charity." Such a blunt refusal to the Prophet's dearest daughter, for whom Abū Bakr cherished the deepest regard, was no easy task. In fact, he had the courage to address this disappointing reply to all the Prophet's legal heirs, including his own daughter, 'Āysha. He displayed the same strength of character at his own death, with regard to the allowance he used to draw from the public treasury. "If there is any surplus out of that money left unexpended," he

said, "it must be refunded to the public treasury." In this respect as well Abū Bakr appears as the beacon light to the posterity of Islam, beckoning all coming generations that nothing should be allowed to dissuade a Muslim from the path of duty—not even the strongest ties of affection.

Appearance  
character.

and

Abū Bakr was a man of fair complexion, lean in body with emaciated cheeks, deep-set eyes and up-drawn forehead. His back had a slight forward inclination. He dyed his hair red and wore a ring on his finger with the inscription *ni'm al-Qādiru Allāh*, i.e., "How good is God, the Almighty." Amongst his numerous virtues, the virtue of generosity stood conspicuous. It was an instinct with him to help the poor and the needy. As a king he did not let any money accumulate in the treasury. Whatever came in, was distributed amongst those who deserved. Man and woman, the slave and the free man, the young and the old, all got equal shares in the distribution. At his death, the State treasury contained not more than a single dirham. He was humble in disposition and very hospitable. He was so tender-hearted that when he recited the Qur'ān, weeping overwhelmed him. Nevertheless he combined with this a high order of bravery. At the most critical junctures, he stood by the side of the Prophet, such as on the

occasion of the Flight, and at the battles of Badr, Uḥud, and Ḥunain. His piety was equally great. For a great part of the night he kept awake praying to God, while in the day-time he would fast. For all this, in time of war he was never seen behind others. When Medīna had no garrison left and was attacked by the rebels, he took all the available men and himself marched out in pursuit of them. Whenever he sent out an expedition, he would in person give it send-off. Notwithstanding his old age, he accompanied Usāma on his Syrian expedition a long way on foot, advising him on various matters. Even in the days of Caliphate he came to Medīna and went back to his country-house on foot, though he was above sixty years of age. He had three sons, 'Abdullāh, 'Abdur Raḥmān, and Muḥammad, and three daughters—Asmā, 'Āyesha, and Ummi-Kalthūm.

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## 'UMAR

### Early Life.

'Umar was the second Caliph of Islam. He is also known by his surname (Ar. Kunya) Abū Ḥaṣṣ, while he received the title of Fārūq, (*i.e.*, one who separated truth from falsehood) after embracing Islam. He was the son of Khaṭṭāb. His mother's name was Hantama. His ancestral lineage joins that of the Prophet with the eighth ancestor. In age, he was thirteen years junior to the Prophet. He came of the clan 'Adiyy which occupied a position of distinction among the Quraish. To this clan was entrusted the important function of an envoy. It was also invested with the powers of arbitration in cases of dispute. While yet a young man, 'Umar was an expert in the science of genealogy, a highly skilled soldier and wrestler and a great orator. At the famous fair of 'Ukāz, where people came from far and wide to display whatever of art or skill they possessed, 'Umar would also take part in wrestling. He had also received education and was one of the few people who at the advent of Islam knew reading and writing. His father had for some time put him to the work of a camel-herdsman. Business, however, was his chief occupation. He had a unique understanding of men and matters which

won him a great reputation and he was appointed as an envoy. Thus, before his acceptance of Islam, he enjoyed a position of marked distinction and esteem.

Conversion to Islam. Zaid, a cousin of 'Umar, was one of the few men who had renounced idolatry before the advent of Islam and who were known as *Hanīf*<sup>1</sup>. When the message of Islam came, Sa'eed, son of Zaid, embraced Islam along with his wife, Fāṭima. A maid servant of 'Umar also joined the fold, for which she received much beating at the hands of her master. 'Umar was bitterly against the Prophet, and one day, under the impulse of this hostility, he took his sword and went out with the resolve to kill him. On the way, he met a man Na'im-bin-'Abdullāh who asked him whither he was going. "To kill Muḥammad", came the sharp reply. Na'im asked him if he was not afraid of the Banī Hāshim and the Banī Zuhra who would certainly avenge the murder of their kinsman. "It seems you too have renounced your religion and embraced Islam", retorted 'Umar. Thereupon Na'im said: "Let me tell you something stranger still. Your own sister and your brother-in-law have also become Muslims." Hearing this, 'Umar went straight to his brother-in-law's house. At the time a man named Khabbāb was giving a lesson in the

<sup>1</sup> *Hanīf* lit. means *one who inclines to a right state*.



Qur'ān in the house. When he came to know of 'Umar's arrival, he hid himself in a corner. 'Umar grew suspicious and enquired of his sister and brother-in-law what sort of recitation was going on there which he had just overheard. "It seems you have become Muslims," said 'Umar angrily. "What then?" replied Sa'eed, "shall we not accept truth if it is somewhere else than in your religion?" At this 'Umar flew into a fit of rage, and fell upon Sa'eed, beating him till he was all besmeared with blood. His sister, Fāṭima, stepped forward to the rescue of her husband. She also got wounded but loudly recited the *kalima*<sup>1</sup>, the Islamic declaration of faith. Her steadfast devotion could not but impress 'Umar. Besides, he was also touched at the sight of his own sister bleeding. He asked for what they were reciting from. The leaves were produced on which was written the chapter known as *Tā hā*. 'Umar began to read it. He had not gone very far through it when the truth sank into his heart. He would go to the Prophet, he said, and embrace Islam. Khabbāb also came out. The Prophet had prayed the previous Thursday night, he said, that God may strengthen Islam either with the

<sup>1</sup> *Kalima* lit. means a word, but technically it is applied to the well known declaration *lā ilāha illallāh Muhammad-ur-Rasūlullāh*, i.e., there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the apostle of God. It is by this declaration alone that a man enters the fold of Islam.

conversion of 'Umar bin Khaṭṭāb or 'Umar bin Hishām (better known as Abū Jahl). That prayer had been granted in favour of the former. 'Umar went straightway to the Prophet who, in those days, used to be in the house of Arqam at the foot of Mount Ṣafā. There the Muslims used to meet together and say their prayers. At the door the Prophet's companions would not allow him to enter, as he had a sword in his hand. Ḥamza, however, said that if God wished him well, he would accept Islam that day. In case he was out on an evil intent, it would not be hard for them to deal with him as he deserved.

The Prophet was as yet inside the house. Coming out he accosted 'Umar, saying, "Wouldn't you desist, 'Umar? I am afraid you may be visited with degradation." 'Umar stepped forward and, reciting the *kalima*, declared Islam. The small brotherhood was filled with joy and raised a shout of *Allāh-u-Akbar* (i.e., God is Great) till the surrounding hills resounded with the echo. 'Umar requested the Prophet to come out in the open and thenceforward publicly preach his faith. This took place in the month of Dhul Ḥajj in the 6th year of the Call. 'Umar was at the time 26 years old.

The Flight. 'Umar's conversion no doubt added to the strength of Islam. The Muslims even said their prayers in the sacred

House of Ka'ba. But it also added to the fury of the opposition which at length assumed unbearable proportions. After years of suffering, the Muslims were at length forced to seek refuge in emigration. The first emigration which had taken place before 'Umar's conversion to Islam was to Abyssinia, and now it was the emigration to Medīna. This time the watch on Muslims was very strict and they slipped out in small groups. The Meccans would not let them emigrate. Nevertheless 'Umar refused to be daunted. He openly started for Medīna with a band of twenty, and halted some two or three miles outside Medīna at the quarter known as Qubā or 'Awālī. About two or three months later when the Prophet arrived in Medīna and founded a fraternity amongst the emigrants and the Medinite Muslims, 'Umar was made the god-brother of 'Utbān-bin-Mālik. They lived at a distance from the Prophet's mosque and therefore arranged to come to the Prophet by turns on alternate days. Each would one day visit the Prophet and the other day attend to his work. When a consultation was held as to the best method to call people to prayer, 'Umar had a vision in which he saw a man reciting the *Adhān* (the Muslim call to prayers). While others mentioned bells and horns in this connection, 'Umar suggested that a man should be appointed to do it. The Holy Prophet ultimately adopted

the form under guidance of Divine revelation. On several other occasions too, Divine revelation concurred with 'Umar's judgment.

Help rendered to  
the cause of Islam.

The Muslims fled to Medīna in the hope that there they would be safe from persecution. The Meccans, however, did not let them alone in this distant asylum. In order to put an end to the movement of Islam, they made repeated incursions on Medīna. The first of these was made in the second year of the Hijra in the month of Ramadzān, and the encounter took place at Badr, which is situated at a distance of three days' journey from Medīna and ten days' from Mecca. 'Umar also took part in this battle. The enemy's strength was thrice that of the Muslims. Nevertheless the Muslims won a decided victory. Seventy prisoners of war also fell into the Muslims' hands. 'Umar was of opinion that they should be all put to the sword, because they were the relentless enemies of Islam and bent upon the annihilation of the Muslims. On this occasion, however, the Prophet did not approve of his proposal and ransomed the prisoners. A year later, the Meccans once more marched against the Muslims, and this time they came with thrice their previous strength. The Muslims met them at the foot of the hill of Uhud, at a distance of

three miles from Medīna. At first, the enemy took to flight but through the blunder of a few Muslim soldiers posted at a strategic point at the mouth of a pass, they turned back and fell upon the Muslims. The latter sustained many casualties. Many fell dead. The Prophet himself was wounded. Some even left the field. The major portion of the army, however, stood by the Prophet. Among these was also 'Umar, and when Abū Sufyān, the commander of the enemy army, shouted aloud whether Muḥammad was alive, whether Abū Bakr was alive, whether 'Umar was alive, the latter could not remain silent and shouted back saying, "Thou enemy of God, we are all alive." In the battle of the Ditch in the fifth year of the Hijra, when the Muslims were besieged within the town of Medina, 'Umar on several occasions displayed feats of bravery. In the sixth year of the Hijra, the Prophet went on a pilgrimage ('Umra) to Mecca. But he was yet nine miles away from the sacred town when at a place Ḥudaibiyya, the Meccans stopped his progress. A truce was concluded for ten years according to which the Muslims had to go back without performing the pilgrimage. A clause still more humiliating to the Muslims laid down that in case a Meccan should embrace Islam and go over to Medina to join the Muslim brotherhood,

the Muslims were to give him no asylum and must make him over to the Meccans; on the contrary, a Muslim was at liberty to renounce Islam and rejoin the Meccans. Humiliating as these conditions were, they were naturally most pinching to the Muslims. 'Umar, however, felt the humiliation most of all, and remonstrated with the Prophet. "Why should we submit to conditions so humiliating," he submitted, "when we are on the right." The Prophet consoled him. On the way back, the Prophet received the Divine revelation known as the chapter of Victory. This gave to the Muslims the happy news that the truce of Hudaibiyya was the harbinger of a great triumph to the cause of Islam. The Prophet forthwith sent for 'Umar and gave him the happy news. 'Umar also participated in the battle of Khaibar which was fought against the Jews in the seventh year of the Hijra. In the eighth year, he participated in the march on Mecca. At the battle of Hunain, when the greater part of the Muslim army fled before the enemy archery, 'Umar was amongst the handful who stuck to their ground. The Prophet himself advanced forward and the enemy was routed. On the occasion of the Tabūk expedition, 'Umar presented half of his life-long savings to the Prophet as contribution towards the war fund.

The Prophet's  
death and after.

When the Prophet was seized with his last illness, he directed Abū Bakr to act as Imām in his stead and conduct prayers. Twice 'Āyesha pleaded that her father was too tender-hearted and used to weep in prayers. She implored that 'Umar might be appointed as Imām. The Prophet, however, insisted that Abū Bakr must lead the prayers. To these very days of the Prophet's illness relates an incident which has been very much misconstrued. Four days before his death when the attack of illness was severe, the Prophet asked for writing material. "Let me give you a writing", he said, "so that you may not go astray after me." On this 'Umar said that the Prophet was overwhelmed by a severe attack of illness and that the Book of God was enough of guidance for the Muslims. From this some have drawn the wrong conclusion that 'Umar prevented the Prophet from writing. They forget that after this incident the Prophet remained alive for four days, and could have dictated his wish any other time, if he desired. The truth of the matter seems to be that whatever the Prophet wanted to leave behind in writing was just what 'Umar had said—*viz.*, that the Muslims should hold fast to the Book of God. When 'Umar gave expression to what was in his own mind, he did not feel any further necessity of

worth noticing

committing the same to writing. At the Prophet's death, 'Umar came to the mosque and thinking that the hypocrites had, out of mischievous motives, spread the false news, declined to believe that the Prophet had actually died. Presently, however, turned up Abū Bakr and on going inside the house found out that the news was too true. When he came out and announced the fact, 'Umar was silenced. After the Prophet's death, 'Umar came to know that the Anṣār had assembled in the Thaḳīfa-banī-Sā'ida, and were holding a consultation as to the election of a Caliph. Forthwith taking Abū Bakr along with himself, he hastened towards the meeting and put a stop to the mischief in time. And when the decision was arrived at, he was the first to formally swear allegiance to Abū Bakr. On taking the reins of Caliphate in hand, the first thing that Abū Bakr did was to despatch the army which the Prophet had in person drawn up for the Syrian expedition under the command of Usāma. He wanted 'Umar to stay behind in the capital and for this he duly asked the permission of the Commander, Usāma. In all the important events that took place during the regime of Abū Bakr, 'Umar's opinion played a special part. 'Umar was the first to conceive the idea of collecting the Qur'ān in a book form. He made the suggestion to



Abū Bakr, saying that many of the *ḥuffāz*, or those who had committed the Qur'ān to memory, were falling in the battles, and hence it was necessary that the Word of God should be collected in a book form. Consequently all the stray manuscripts written in the Prophet's own life-time were collected and compiled into one volume. This copy subsequently remained in the possession of Ḥafṣa, 'Umar's daughter and the Prophet's wife. Before his death, Abū Bakr appointed 'Umar as his successor, after due consultation with the prominent Muslims. And the magnificent work of the consolidation of the power of Islam, of which the foundation-stone was laid by Abū Bakr, was carried to completion by 'Umar.

'Umar pursues  
the frontier policy  
of Abu Bakr.

In the life of Abū Bakr, it has been discussed at length that the campaigns undertaken under the orders of the first Caliph of Islam against the Persian and Syrian frontiers were merely defensive measures, inspired neither by ambition for territorial aggrandizement, nor by zeal for conversion. They were meant only to suppress the elements of disorder in those quarters which were disturbing the internal peace of Arabia. These campaigns were confined to the territories with purely Arab population. On taking the reins of government in hand, 'Umar pursued the frontier policy of his

predecessor with his characteristic zeal and vigour, with the result that in the course of a few years, both the mighty neighbouring empires of Persia and Rome crumbled before the armies of Islam.

Objection against  
early Muslim Con-  
quests.

How at all, the question arises, did such an eventuality become possible if the policy was to fortify the frontiers, to restrict the tactics to exclusively Arab-populated parts and not to conquer foreign lands? Why were Persia and Syria, nay, even Egypt, subjugated and annexed to the empire of Islam? Was it not clearly the passion of conquest that carried the crescent far and wide? Non-Muslim historians have made much of this circumstance, and without giving a thought to the real cause, have put these expeditions down to the territorial and loot lust of Muslims, supplemented by a fanatic zeal for proselytism. The objection, as we will presently show, is due to ignorance of real facts. It will be seen, on the other hand, that the Muslims did all they could to avert war, and were only driven into it by the repeated attacks of the Persians and the Romans.

To begin with, we must repeat what we pointed out before, that early historians of Islam do not record anything like a detailed narrative of an episode. These works are mostly the productions of a later period when the empire of

Islam had already spread over a goodly portion of the populated globe. Brought up in the lap of national prosperity and splendour, the vision of those historians seems to have been engrossed by that dazzling splendour all around. The question what troubles their forefathers, the builders of that empire, experienced at the hands of the neighbouring countries was simply barred out of their mental camera by this all-comprehensive national grandeur. Perhaps their mental vision, being the product of the most glorious of environments, was incapable of turning to the other side of the picture. That their forefathers could have been despised and constantly worried by Persians and Syrians, they simply could not imagine in the midst of changed conditions when the banner of the crescent proudly waved over a vast portion of the globe. Hence it is that these historians are silent on the causes that prompted the early Muslims to these wars. All they tell us is that such and such a battle was fought with such and such a result, without saying why and how were these hostilities started. Even if the details of these events were preserved, they might have helped modern critics in unravelling the mass of narration and tracing the root causes. Nevertheless, here and there, one does come across just a stray clue which serves as a ray of

light in an otherwise dark situation. Take, for instance, the words of 'Umar spoken after the conquest of Mesopotamia and recorded by all historians, "I wish between ourselves and Persia there were a mountain of fire." Muir records in *The Caliphate* that when a certain general, Ziyād, after the conquest of Mesopotamia, asked 'Umar's permission to advance to Khurāsān in pursuit of the Persian forces, 'Umar forbade him, saying: "I desire that between Mesopotamia and the countries beyond, the hills shall be a barrier so that the Persians shall not be able to get at us, nor we at them. The plain of Al-'Irāq sufficeth for our wants. I would rather the safety of my people than thousands of spoil and further conquest." Commenting on this, the Christian historian observes: "The thought of a world-wide mission was yet in embryo; obligation to enforce Islam by a universal crusade had not yet dawned upon the Muslim mind." This is a clear admission that Islam is free of the charge of being spread at the point of sword till at least the time of 'Umar.

The safety of Arabia was the sole motive of the Early Caliphate wars.

It is noteworthy that the words of 'Umar quoted above pertain to the year 16 A. H. when Syria and Mesopotamia had both been conquered. Thus, at least till the conquest of 'Irāq and Syria, the alleged passion of converting

people at the point of the sword had not seized the Muslim mind. This should conclusively establish at least this much, that during the reign of Abū Bakr when these expeditions were launched, and subsequently, for three years during 'Umar's reign, when these countries were subjugated, the causes of warfare were not religious but political. The words of 'Umar leave no room for doubt that national defence was the only motive underlying these conquests. "I would rather the safety of my people than thousands of spoil and further conquest," he said. Thus the idea was neither the propagation of Islam nor territorial conquest, nor the lust of spoils. "Safety of my people" was the sole motive. 'Umar's words exonerate not only 'Umar himself from the baseless charge, but they also clear Abū Bakr of all base motives that spite has imputed to him. For, 'Umar was the chief adviser of Abū Bakr, and nothing of importance was done without his consultation. It is thus obvious that from the very day that these campaigns were started, the Muslims were prompted by no other consideration than their own safety.

That the safety of Arabia was the sole consideration of 'Umar is also shown by the words which he uttered after the conquest of Persia. Announcing the happy news of the Persian

conquest, the Caliph made an impressive speech in the course of which he observed: "Now the Persians will not be able to injure Islam." Thus the only idea was to protect the infant State of Islam from injury by the neighbouring empires, and this, in fact, furnishes the master-key to find out the causes of all the battles. Self-defence had driven Muslims now as in the life-time of the Prophet to unsheathe the sword. With this object alone were these wars undertaken by Abū Bakr, and with the same purpose were they continued by 'Umar, and no sooner that object was realised than the sword was sheathed. If, as alleged, territorial extension were the end, why at all did they stop short at Persia? The campaign should rather have been carried on with greater zeal now that the Muslims commanded far greater strength and resources. But that was never the goal. Self-preservation was the only motive and as soon as the forces which wanted to annihilate Islam were crushed, there was an end to these wars. ✓

Defeat enhanced  
Persia & Rome's  
passion for re-  
venge.

Such relics of those times preserved in the pages of history, though stray and scanty, furnish a proof positive of the accuracy of our contention. Even in the absence of these, a mere commonsense view of the working of human nature should have led us to the same conclusion.

There is no doubt about the fact that at the very outset when Islam took a firm footing in the soil of Arabia, Persia and Syria viewed this rising power in their neighbourhood with jealousy and alarm. From that very time, these powers were anxious to crush the young power and subjugate Arabia. Persia openly sent reinforcements to the rebels of Baḥrain. From 'Irāq, the country under the sway of Persia, arose Sajāḥ with pretensions to prophethood and marched to attack the capital of Islam. This could not be done without the instigation of Persia, the ruling power of 'Irāq. These were small beginnings, but, later on, when in direct hostilities, Persia met with reverses at the hands of the Muslims, it was but natural that it should have imported into the conflict all the fury of a wounded pride. It was the depth of ignominy for a mighty power, as Persia undoubtedly was, to be defeated by an upstart power on which it looked down with contempt. Passion of conquest was thus supplemented by passion of revenge, and this gained in fury with every fresh defeat the Muslims inflicted on it. If in the beginning there was any wavering in the mind of Persia as regards the conquest of Arabia, its own successive defeats and loss of some territory now made it a matter of necessity, and the whole country was now burning with this one passion —

*viz.*, to crush Islam. This is plain psychology. This was exactly how events in the Prophet's life shaped themselves. While at Mecca, the progress of Islam excited jealousy, and the result was severe persecution. When he emigrated to Medīna, the rapid success of his cause there kindled the jealousy of the Meccans all the more, and this impelled them to attack Medīna. The defeat of Badr, however, inflicted a deep wound on their sense of pride, and the flames of jealousy were now intermingled with those of revenge. They returned to attack with a yet greater force, but failure at the field of Uḥud proved another humiliation to them. This inflamed them to the highest pitch of passion, and with the fullest possible force that they could muster, they returned once more to give a crushing blow to the Muslims. The history of the Persian and Syrian wars was only a repetition of the war in Arabia. In the beginning, the Persians and the Romans considered it beneath their dignity to seriously come out in battle array against the Muslims. They only instigated and helped the border tribes against them, or sent a battalion just to teach the naughty youngster a lesson. With every fresh defeat, however, their passion of revenge grew in intensity, and in proportion as this passion gained in fury, they put in greater



numbers into the field. Now they were out in all earnest to turn the Muslims out of their land and to conquer Arabia and crush Islam. And they made no secret of it. In the year 14 A. H., when Rustam, the famous Persian General, came out for battle on the field of Qādisiyya, this is how he loudly swaggered: "The whole of Arabia will I smash." It shows what the ambition of Persia was. Not the expulsion of Muslims from Persia, but the destruction of Arabia—this was the passion that kindled their bosoms. This exactly was the case with the Roman Empire of Syria. As further events will show, a number of times the Muslims sent envoys to the enemy, expressing their anxiety for the cessation of hostilities, the adjustment of frontiers and restoration of peace. But every time they were met with a contemptuous refusal. War was thus actually forced on them and there was no running away from it.

A necessity of war. There is yet another consideration that can rightly be urged in justification of subjugating Persia and Syria. When one nation makes an unprovoked attack on another, it at once becomes the latter's duty not merely to repulse the attack, but also to carry the fight on to the finish till one of the combatants should surrender. The Persians, as already

shown, struck the first blow. They violated the independence of Arabia by encroaching upon its soil. They made a common cause with the rebels and sent troops for the destruction of the power of Islam. Likewise, towards the north, the Romans stirred up Christian tribes against Islam. Consequently, when hostilities formally started and troops met on the battle field, no canons of warfare bound the Arabs to restrict their operations only to their own territory and content themselves with just expelling the enemy. Had they been guilty of this blunder, the enemy would certainly have re-appeared soon after, in greater force. It would have been sheer stupidity to have stopped short at that. In all civilized warfare, when once the die is cast, it is open to either party to continue the fight to a finish. Either one of the contending parties must surrender or it must be thoroughly crushed. Why, after all, were the Allies anxious, during the Great War, to push forward right up to the capital of Germany, and were not content with merely driving the enemy out of French and Belgian soil? Why did they not consent to a cessation of hostilities until they as victors dictated their own terms to the vanquished? Such are the rules of the game, and if the Muslims played that game to an issue, where lay the harm? In prosecuting

war till Persia and Syria were completely broken down, the Muslims had behind them all the sanction of civilized warfare, ancient as well as modern.

Islam, Jizya or the sword. In this connection we must remove another most gross misunderstanding. The envoys, it is alleged, that were sent during these wars to negotiate with the enemy, were sent with no better terms than the offer of three alternatives: Islam, *Jizya* or the sword. The message attributed to the envoys is undoubtedly coloured with the ideas of later times when the empire of Islam was established on all sides, so as to give it a significance quite the opposite of what it originally implied. The message is apparently worded so as to imply that the Muslims offered their religion at the point of the sword. Now this was never the idea during these Persian and Syrian wars, when this message is said to have been delivered first. One thing that is certain beyond the faintest shadow of doubt is that never was Islam presented in accompaniment to the sword nor thrust upon anyone at the point of the sword. Sir William Muir, as already quoted, admits that at least till the year 16 A. H., when Syria and 'Irāq had already been conquered, no such idea of forcing religion on others had taken birth in the hearts of the Muslims. How

could they then have given a message, the very idea of which had not yet entered their minds. And then, there is another equally well-established fact that shoulder to shoulder with the Muslims and under the standard of Islam, there were also Christian soldiers fighting against their common foe, and in defence of their common motherland, Arabia. If conversion by force formed any part of the purpose of these wars, it is inconceivable either that the Muslims would have invited their Christian fellow countrymen to make common cause with them or that the latter should have come forward to do so. What is more significant still, there were non-Muslim tribes with whom Muslims concluded peace without either converting them or demanding *Jizya*. The only condition of peace was that they would fight side by side with the Muslims in case of a war. The people of Jarjoma, for instance, during the Syrian conquests, when Antioch was captured and payment of *Jizya* was commonly accepted by the populace, refused to do so on the plea that they were prepared to fight the Muslims' battles against their enemy. The condition was accepted and peace concluded accordingly. Neither did they embrace Islam, nor did they pay any *Jizya*. During the Persian conquests as well, twice was peace made on this very condition, once with the

Chief of Jurjān, and again with that of Bāb. At these two places also military service was accepted in lieu of *Jizya*. These are all clear facts recorded by every historian. Possibly there were others of the kind that were never recorded. Now, on the one hand, the presence of the Christian soldiers side by side with the Muslims, shows beyond all doubt that the wars could not be religious but were merely in defence of the country, whereas, on the other hand, the same conclusion is borne out by the fact that peace was concluded with several of the Christian and Magian tribes without either their accepting Islam or paying *Jizya*. These are all events of authentic history, admitted on all hands, and give the lie direct to the so-called story of "Islam, *Jizya* or the sword," just as the peace terms in the Prophet's life-time disprove the baseless charge that the enemy was offered the choice of either Islam or the sword.

Significance of the  
alleged message.

Two things are now clear. In the first place, war with Persia and the Roman Empire was forced upon the Muslims, and the two great powers sought to crush the rising power of Islam. And secondly, that the alleged message "Islam, *Jizya* or the sword" could never have been conveyed in the form which later writers have given to it, because the Muslims throughout these wars accepted the

alliance of Christian and other non-Muslim tribes, and these tribes fought side by side with them against a non-Muslim foe. What actually happened was clearly this that the Muslims finding the Roman Empire and Persia bent upon the subjugation of Arabia and the extirpation of Islam, refused to accept terms of peace which contained no safeguards against a repetition of the aggression. This safeguard was demanded in the form of *Jizya* or a tribute which would be an admission of defeat on their part. How could a war be terminated without bringing it to a successful issue? If the enemy had been victorious, it would have over-run the peninsula of Arabia. The Muslims were willing to avoid further bloodshed after inflicting defeat on the enemy, only if the enemy admitted defeat and agreed to pay a tribute which was at any rate not as excessive as the crushing war indemnities of the present day. The offer of terminating hostilities simply on payment of *Jizya* was thus an act of merciful dealing with a vanquished foe, and for this it would be senseless to blame the Muslims. If the payment of a tribute was unacceptable to the vanquished power, the Muslims could do nothing but push the victory further on until the enemy was completely vanquished. This very natural situation that the Caliph 'Umar had to face is generally described as the

offering of two alternatives by the Muslim forces, the *Jizya* or the sword.

The third alternative, *i.e.*, the offering of Islam, was not really connected with war. Islam was a missionary religion from its very inception, and it had a world-wide message. The Holy Prophet himself invited, besides the idolaters of Arabia, the Jews, the Christians, the Magians and the followers of other religions to accept the religion of Islam, and many of these people who lived in the peninsula and whom the message had reached had become Muslims. He had even written letters to all the great potentates living on the borders of Arabia, including the Heraclius and the Ruler of Persia, to accept Islam. This was long before the actual commencement of hostilities with these two powers. And the envoys of Islam, wherever they went, looked upon it as their first duty to offer the message of Islam to every people, because they felt that Islam imparted a new life and vigour to mankind, and lifted up humanity from the depths of degradation to the height of civilization. The Arabs experienced the great transformation in their own case, and out of sympathy for others they invited them to avail of the wonderful change which Islam worked in man. In writing down the history of the Muslim wars, the Muslim chroniclers did not care much

for the missionary activities of the Muslims, and hence it is generally without giving any details that they simply refer to the fact that Islam was offered by such and such an envoy. Occasionally, however, when the details are referred to, they show that the Arab envoys always related their own experience, stating how Islam had brought about a wonderful transformation in the Arab nation, and that it would work the same transformation in any other nation that accepted it. It is a gross distortion of facts to say that Islam was offered at the point of the sword, when there is not a single instance in which Islam was forced upon even a single prisoner of war whether he came from Persia or Syria. Islam was offered no doubt, but never offered at the point of the sword either to an individual or to a nation. Just as there is not a single instance on record in which an individual was told that he should accept Islam or he would be killed, there is no instance on record in which a tribe or a nation was told that the Muslims would carry sword and fire into its territory if it did not accept Islam. The Muslims had to fight their wars as the most civilized nations of to-day have to fight theirs, but these wars arose out of other causes, and the one thing beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt is that the Muslims in their struggles with Persia and the Roman Empire



were not the aggressors.

There is one more consideration. Never was Islam offered at the commencement of hostilities, so that even a doubt should arise that it was offered as an alternative to the opening of hostilities. It was in the later stages of a war which had been carried on for a sufficiently long time that we find that the envoys of peace offered Islam. The war was already there, and every war has to be carried on to the bitter end until one party is completely crushed. The Muslims had to carry on their war until either the enemy admitted defeat and agreed to pay tribute or his power was finally crushed. In the middle of the war, Islam was offered only as a message of mercy, for the one peculiarity of Islam was its unrivalled brotherhood. The different tribes of Arabia which had for centuries been the implacable foes of, and carried on war with, each other, had been converted into one solid nation by their acceptance of Islam. The new religion had therefore the miraculous effect of turning inveterate foes into loving brethren who forgot all their rancours. If, therefore, the enemy nation that had sought to crush Islam came to the conclusion that as a religion Islam was acceptable, the Persian and the Arab would become brethren and fighting would *ipso facto* cease. No other nation would

show such magnanimity to a deadly foe in a deadly fight. As a rule, if one nation makes a wanton attack on another with a view to crushing it, the latter would not rest content until it has inflicted a crushing defeat upon the aggressor. But Islam came as a message of mercy, and that mercy was imported even into the bitter sphere of warfare. As human beings, the Arabs might be burning with a spirit of vengeance for the wrong done them by the Persians, but the brotherhood of Islam was too great and all ideas of revenge must be given up. Nay, more, the erstwhile enemies become, as the Quran puts it, brothers in faith. It was in this sense, in this spirit, as a message of goodwill and mercy, that Islam was offered to the enemy as one and the best safeguard against the recrudescence of national rancour and bitterness. ✓

Persian force  
under Hurmuz  
A.H. 13, A.D. 634.

After these introductory remarks to show how the Muslims were driven into these wars, we would now resume the thread of the story where we left it. On the Persian frontier, it will be recollected, Khālīd left his headquarters at Hira leaving Muthannā in charge, and at the head of half the army marched towards Syria, under the orders of Abū Bakr. Mesopotamia was yet in the possession of Persia. Khālīd had, with the

help of Muthannā, cleared only the strip of territory to the west of the Euphrates, which formed part of Arabia. Between the Muslims and the Persians now lay the strong barrier of the river, and if the Persians only stopped further molestation, the two countries, divided as they were by water, could have remained at peace, confined to their own positions. But Persia, notwithstanding its domestic disputes, was seized with one mania, *viz.*, the smashing up of Arabia. After the departure of Khālid, a force of 10,000 strong was despatched under the command of Hurmuz, to fall upon Muthannā. The Muslim army was comparatively very small but the deficiency in numbers was made up by its unflinching intrepidity. It was decided that rather than wait for the advancing troops, it would be better to take them by surprise. Before the high spirits of Muslim soldiers, nothing was impossible. The manoeuvre was at once made. The river was crossed and an attack delivered. The Persian army was overawed by this sudden move of the Muslim forces, and took to flight in utter confusion. Having thus routed the foe, the Muslims retraced their steps to their original position on the western bank and encamped there.

Muslim General's  
appeal to Caliph.

Every disaster on the battle-field  
only added to the flame of the

Persians' fury. Theirs was a vast empire, and so were their resources. Muthannā had grave apprehensions that the Persians, freed from their domestic dispute, would invade Arabia again and in a far greater force. His own men, a mere handful as they were, would hardly be able to resist the coming attack. He communicated these reasonable fears to Abū Bakr, stating that without fresh troops, he would not be able to maintain that position. He also suggested that to meet this exigency, the ban on the rebel tribes might be removed and permission given to enlist them in the army. Many days passed but he got no reply from the Capital. In view of the critical situation, therefore, in person he set out for Medīna. On arriving there, he found the Caliph on his death-bed. Nevertheless, the dying Caliph, on seeing Muthannā, sent for 'Umar, and told him not to worry about his own illness or death but to give immediate attention to the Persian frontier and send reinforcements there. Abū Bakr passed away the same day, and the following day the new Caliph made an announcement for volunteers; but, at first, owing to the awe in which the Arabs held the Persians, the appeal met with no reply. In the midst of the scene of profound silence, 'Umar rose and gave a soul-stirring address. Muthannā also encouraged the people by assuring

them that the Persians could not withstand them. There was a considerable gathering of people at the time, who had come from various parts to take the usual oath of allegiance to the new Caliph. Quite a respectable army was at once raised. Abū 'Ubaid, though he did not possess the distinction of being one of the Prophet's companions, was put in chief command.

Hira lost and re-  
gained. Battle at  
Namaraq.

Meanwhile, the Persians were also busy making preparations for a fresh attack. They sank their domestic differences and sent out the famous Rustam at the head of a large army. The first thing Rustam did was to send emissaries to stir up revolt in the Arabian territory captured by the Muslims. The plan succeeded, and the Muslims lost all their possessions. Muthannā was forced to retreat to Hira and waited for Abū 'Ubaid. In the meantime, one division of Rustam's army crossed the river and fell upon the Muslims. A battle thus took place at a place called Namāraq, in which the Persians were defeated. The other division of Rustam's army was yet on the Persian side of the river. Abū 'Ubaid made haste to cross to that side and defeated that division also. Thus did the Muslims regain possession of Hira.

Battle of Jazr.

Rustam was much infuriated at the news of the crushing defeat. He

despatched a fresh army under the command of Bahman which encamped on the eastern side of the river, somewhere near Babel. The Muslims, after defeating the Persians, had returned to their old position at Hira on the western bank. Thus the river divided the two hostile armies. Bahman sent word to Abū 'Ubaid, suggesting that either party should cross the river, in order to be able to engage in battle. Abū 'Ubaid held a council to decide which course to adopt. His officers were of opinion that the enemy should be left to cross the river. At this the Persians reproached the Muslims for becoming cowardly. Abū 'Ubaid was a man of keen sense of honour. He could not bear this taunt and ordered his men to cross the river to meet the Persians on their own ground. The river was crossed but the space on the other bank was too narrow for action. Besides, there were many elephants in the Persian army. The Arab steeds, unaccustomed to the sight\* of such huge creatures, took fright and would not face these animals. The Muslim soldiers jumped down from their horses, and made a dash against the elephants—men against elephants. This was a most reckless, though a most heroic, attempt. Abū 'Ubaid perished in the struggle, being trampled over by an elephant. The tide of elephants could not be checked, and

the Muslim army in utter consternation beat a retreat to the river-side. Some one had in the meantime broken the bridge, in the hope that the absence of means of escape would infuse the retreating Muslims with the courage of despair. But this only added to the consternation and many threw themselves into the river. When Muthannā beheld this scene of discomfiture, he at once had the bridge constructed again, and himself rushing to check the enemy, effected a successful retreat of the whole army over the bridge. But many perished in this heroic struggle, whereas those recently recruited took to flight. Out of an army of 9,000, only 3000 remained under the standard of Muthannā. Those, however, who fled, were so overwhelmed with shame that for a long time they did not go back to their homes. The history of Islam at this period presents no other event so disastrous. This battle is known as the battle of Jasr or the Bridge.

Persia again defeated at Bu-waib.

When the news of this disaster reached Medīna, 'Umar immediately despatched couriers in all directions, calling for fresh volunteers. It was now a question of the defence of homeland all over Arabia, and the chiefs of the Christian tribes also came to Medīna with thousands of men as their quota of contribution towards the

cause of national defence. Were it not a question purely of the preservation of national independence, there is no reason why thousands of Christians should have so enthusiastically flocked to rally around the standard of Islam to fight the battles of the Muslims against the non-Muslims. A considerable army was thus raised and despatched to the help of Muthannā under the command of Jarīr. After the battle of Jasr, Bahman, the Persian general, had hastened back to the capital as he had been apprised of an insurrection there. At that time the capital of Persia was Madāin, situated on the Tigris on either bank, some fifteen miles from modern Baghdād and some fifty from the battle-field. The insurrection having been suppressed, the Persians again despatched a large army under Mahrān. The two armies met at a place called Buwaib, somewhere near Kūfa. The Persians were on the eastern bank of the Euphrates and the Muslims on the western. This time it was the Persians who crossed the river, and they were defeated after a hard and bloody contest. Mahrān himself was slain by a Christian soldier of the army of Islam. The Persians fled in utter confusion. But finding the way to the bridge already blocked, they returned to the charge and perished on the field in large numbers.



Sa'd appointed  
generalissimo  
A.H. 14, A.D. 635.

The fire of revenge once more blazed up in Persia. There was at the time a woman on the throne. She was dethroned and Yazdejird, a young prince of 16, was made king. Domestic feuds were all forgotten. Secret machinations were as usual employed to spread anarchy in Muslim possessions. Once more Muthannā had to retreat, this time far back to the old frontier of Arabia. Arabia was also astir as never before. Proclamation of *Jihād* was made all over the land. The Caliph was anxious in person to take the command, but the council of advisers did not approve of it. Sa'd bin Abī-Waqqāṣ was chosen for the chief command, and with a detailed plan of the battle and at the head of a large army, he marched to the frontier. At a distance of three days' journey from Kūfa, he encamped, surveyed the situation and wrote a detailed account to the Caliph. Muthannā had already succumbed to the wounds he had received at the battle of Jasr, and died before the arrival of Sa'd. Before his death, however, he had left detailed instructions for Sa'd, which his brother now communicated to the new general. The total strength of the Muslim army stood at 30,000. The Caliph sent instructions to encamp at Qādisiya, and there, with the mountain in the

rear, to draw up the army in regular martial array. The Caliph also desired that, before opening hostilities, envoys should be sent over to the Court of Persia with the message of Islam. So confident was he of the intrinsic beauties of the teachings of Islam and of its peaceful principles that he did not consider it impossible to vanquish the foe with the sword of truth, rather than that of steel, even now when passions were running so high. Madāin, the capital of Persia, was forty miles from the Muslim encampment. Forthwith envoys galloped on the backs of horses, obtained the audience of the king and conveyed to him the message of Islam. But who listened to such a thing there? They were laughed at, ridiculed and scorned. "You are a contemptible people," retorted Yazdejird. "Undoubtedly we were so," replied the Muslim spokesman, "we were a people of no consequence. But God raised a Prophet in our midst who purged us of all those low and base things and put us on the path of virtue. Should you also accept this message, we are all brothers; otherwise it is not possible for us, at this stage, to give up hostilities without your agreeing to pay us tribute." Hearing this Yazdejird could not control himself, and very harshly turned the envoys out. One of them was even made to bear a basket full of earth, to

impress upon them that they were a mean people and would be made thus to work as slaves for the Persians. The Muslim deputies, however, were not so easily to be depressed. They took it as a happy augury and brought away the basket with the earth to their own camp, saying that with their own hands the Persians had made over their land to them. What unshakable faith!

Battle of Qadisiya  
14 A. H. 635 A. D.

Persia mustered all its strength this time to strike a decisive blow. An army of one hundred and twenty thousand was raised, and put under the command of their greatest war hero, Rustam. Though this was full four times the Muslims' numbers, yet there was hesitation in Persian ranks to take the field against the foe, of whom they had by this time had sufficient experience. But an army so stupendous could not long be detained without much damage to the country-side where it was encamped. At length, Rustam had to come out. Once more the Muslims tried for peace, the envoy offering Rustam the same terms as were offered to the youthful king. Rustam was much infuriated and boasted that he would smash the whole of Arabia to pieces. The following day, they filled up the canal that was separating the two armies, thus preparing a way to cross to the enemy's side. The Persian army advanced. Sa'd was

feeling unwell and was unable to move about. He directed the operations from his sick bed. This was a most bloody battle which lasted for three whole days. The first day's battle is known by the name *Yaum-ul-Armáth*, the second day's by *Yaumul Aghwáth*, the third day's by *Yaum-ul-Imás*. On the very first day of the battle arrived the Syrian division which was originally stationed in Mesopotamia, to reinforce the Muslim army. On the first two days, fortune fluctuated between the two sides. Ebb and flow went on by turns but both sides kept their respective grounds. Losses on the Persian side were heavier. The third day also presented the same appearance. The wall of Persian elephants would not let the Muslim horsemen advance. At length Qa'qā' managed to pull down two of the beasts, and as a result all the rest fled in terror. The fury of the battle was, however, unabated, and it continued throughout the night. When the day broke, Qa'qā' took a handful of the most daring soldiers and rushed upon Rustam. This was a signal for the whole army to turn that way. Rustam, seeing this, jumped down from his high seat, got wounded and while running away, was recognised and killed by a Muslim soldier. With the death of the commander-in-chief, the Persian troops took to flight. Thus came this

most terrible battle of Qādisiya to a close. A large quantity of spoils fell into the hands of Muslims. Casualties on the Muslim side during all three days numbered 8,500, but the Persians suffered a much heavier loss. This took place in the month of Ramadzān, 14 A. H., corresponding to October, 635 A. D.

Sa'd's advance on Madain; the western part evacuated by Persians, 15 A. H., 636 A. D.

The battle of Qādisiya was a decisive one in the campaign of Mesopotamia. It completely broke down the strength of Persia. The defeated army took refuge in Babel. After a short stay at Qādisiya, Sa'd advanced on Babel, and driving the enemy out, took possession of the whole of that strip of territory. The Persians took shelter within the walls of Bahrasher, the part of the capital on the western bank of the Tigris, the real capital being on the eastern bank. With the sanction of the Caliph, after a few months, in the year 15 A. H., Sa'd marched against the capital. Several skirmishes took place on the way. At some distance from Madāin, the queen-mother in person came out at the head of the army to stem the Muslim advance, but was defeated. The victorious army pushed forward to the capital, and on beholding the palaces of the Chosroes, Sa'd burst out into an exclamation of joy: "Allāh-u-Akbar," he shouted; "this day the Prophet's prophecy has

been fulfilled," referring to the incident when the Prophet, while engaged in digging a ditch around Medīna in the battle of Aḥzāb, observed that he had just then been shown the palaces of the Chosroes—a spiritual phenomenon known as *kashf*—and that the angel Gabriel had informed him that his followers would overpower these. At length, Sa'd laid siege to the western part of the capital. The siege lasted for months but at last the Persians could no longer hold out. They evacuated this part of the town, taking refuge in the eastern part. Thus the whole of the territory between the Euphrates and the Tigris, which is Mesopotamia proper, came into the possession of the Muslims.

Fall of Madain, 16 A. H., 637 A. D. Now the situation was that on the western bank of the Tigris were encamped the Muslim troops, whereas the eastern was occupied by the Persians. This state continued for some time when, at last, Sa'd explained to his soldiers the danger of their position. The boats, he said, were all in the possession of the enemy who might swoop down on them any time they chose, whereas they, the Persians, were immune from attack. Their situation was, therefore, unsafe until the enemy were ejected out of their stronghold on the eastern bank. There was only one way open to them;

somehow they must screw up all their courage and cross the river. Now, the Tigris is a stream of great depth and velocity. The Muslims had no boats. But they still possessed one thing—an indomitable pluck before which could stand neither mountains, nor rivers. Six hundred of the bravest men were picked out and divided into ten detachments of sixty each. The first sixty threw their horses into the river and in the teeth of the swift current gained the opposite bank. Their example was followed by the rest of detachments. This feat of rare valour was displayed under the very eyes of the Persians, who, beholding this wonderful performance, were seized with unspeakable terror, and fled away in utter consternation, crying, "Genii! genii have come!" Yazdejird had already relieved himself of his treasures and the ladies of his household whom he had sent further off to Hulwān. Now that he heard this terrible news, he also took to flight. In the month of Ṣafar, 16 A. H., corresponding to March, 637 A. D., Sa'd entered Madā'in, and while thus marching through the town in triumph, he had on his lips that prophetic verse of the Qur'ān: "How many the gardens they left, and springs and crops and magnificent mansions and luxuries in which they lived! Aye, even so; and We gave them as a heritage

to another people" (45 : 25—28). It was without doubt a clear sign of Divine might, how a small nation that was looked upon with contempt, and whose envoy was sent back with a basket of dust on his head—how such an insignificant nation overthrew a most mighty empire of the day, with no more than 30,000 men. Silver, gold and diamonds, the spoils of war, when brought together made quite a heap. One-fifth, including the Chosroes' robes and ornaments and a highly precious carpet inlaid with diamonds, was sent over to Medīna. Fifteen years before when the Prophet was running away for his life from Mecca to Medina, and a price was set on his head, dead or alive, a certain man Surāqa had gone out in search of the precious fugitive. It so happened, however, that every time Surāqa came within reach of the Prophet, his horse stumbled and fell down. Seeing that some hidden Power protected the Prophet, the pursuer repented of his conduct, and on bended knee asked for pardon. But he had more than a pardon. "Surāqa," said the Prophet, "I see the gold bracelets of the Chosroes on your wrists." And lo! the spoils that came to Medina actually contained a pair of the Persian king's gold bracelets. Surāqa was immediately sent for and made to wear them, and the joy of the faithful knew no bounds when



they saw the prophecy of their beloved Master come out so literally true. When 'Umar beheld the enormous riches brought as spoils, tears came to his eyes. On being asked what made him weep at that moment of joy, the Caliph said: "I fear this wealth and comfort may not ultimately cause the ruin of my people." And when Ziyād, who had escorted the spoils to the capital, asked the Caliph's permission if the army might extend its conquests further on towards Khurāsān, he positively forbade him: "I would much rather see an insurmountable mountain between Mesopotamia and those lands, so that neither they should be able to approach us nor we should be able to approach them."

Persians' advance on and defeat at Jalula A. H. 16, A. D. 637.

The eastern part of Madāin fell in the year 16 A.H. Sa'd encamped here for the summer months which passed off in quiet Yazdejird took refuge in Hulwān, about a hundred miles to the north of Madāin. Once more he ordered the Persian forces to advance, and a part of his army occupied Jalūlā which was a very strongly fortified place with a rampart and a deep trench around it. Sa'd sent for the Caliph's permission to adopt counter-measures, on the receipt of which he despatched a division of 12,000 strong under Qa'qā' to meet the Persians who had taken up

their position within the fortifications of Jalūlā. Siege was laid to the place but the besieged were in unbroken communication with Hulwān, from where they regularly received all help. The siege dragged on for eighty days, when the Persians were again defeated. Yazdejird shifted his headquarters along with the residue of his forces to Ray. Qa'qā' proceeded to Hulwān, took possession of the place and left a garrison there.

Battle of Takrit  
16 A. H., 637 A. D.  
Christian tribes  
embrace Islam.  
Mosul occupied.

For the present all was quiet so far as Persia was concerned. There was no apprehension of another attack. But in the meanwhile war clouds were gathering in the north. At Takrit, about a hundred miles from Madāin, Roman forces were mustering strong. They had also won over some Christian Beduin tribes to their side. To meet this new danger, the Muslim army marched northward. The two armies encountered at Takrit. As usual, the Muslims sent envoys to the Christian tribes with the message of Islām, with the result that these tribes embraced the faith and joined hands with the Muslim forces. These were the three tribes of Ayād, Taghlab and Namar. The Roman army sustained a crushing defeat. The Muslims advanced further up and took possession of Mosul. Takrit and Mosul were both parts of Jazīra, a province of Mesopotamia.

It was the concourse of the Roman forces that compelled Muslims to attack these places. They never invaded Jazīra until the people of that part had, with the help of Roman forces, been the first to attack them. But more of this later on in the course of discussion on the Syrian wars.

While Sa'd was busy fighting in Basra and Kufa founded, 17 A. H. upper Mesopotamia, 'Umar was not unmindful of the southern part, to strengthen which he directed 'Utba to take possession of Ubulla, a sea port on the Persian Gulf. This 'Utba did in the year 14 A. H. with the help of a battalion which he took along with him from Baḥrain. In the vicinity of this place was three years later, in the year 17 A.H., founded the town of Baṣra. Towards the north sprang up the town of Kūfa. Thus both these towns which ultimately developed into big centres were founded during the reign of 'Umar.

Damascus conquered, 14 A. H., 635 A. D.

To turn to the Syrian theatre of war, it will be recollected that in a pitched battle at Ajnādain the Muslims had defeated the Roman forces, about 2,50,000 strong, the news of which brilliant victory arrived at Medīna just at the time when Abū Bakr was on his death-bed. After this disaster, Heraclius took refuge in Antioch, whereas the Muslim general, Khālīd, marched on Damascus in the year

14 A.H. Damascus, the capital of Syria from ancient days, is situated in a most fertile valley known for the charm of its natural scenery as the paradise of the world. It is also a flourishing centre of commerce. Khālid, keeping in view the importance of the town, laid siege to it after great preparations. The siege lasted for full six months. Heraclius sent some reinforcements to the besieged from Hims, but Khālid despatched a detachment to block their way. The cold of Damascus was very trying for the dwellers of the desert but rather than give the siege up, they put up with this hardship. One night, on the occasion of a festival, intelligence was brought to Khālid that the whole town had given itself up to drinking and merry-making. Taking advantage of the situation, he took a handful of the bravest men with him, scaled the rampart, jumped down and, killing the guard, flung the gate open. The Muslims rushed in. The besieged saw that resistance was of no avail, and they themselves opened the gate at the other end of the town to the division under Abū 'Ubaida. For this reason the whole town was granted immunity. Neither any prisoners nor any spoils were taken. The conquest of Damascus took place in the year 14 A. H. corresponding to 635 A. D.

## Battle of Fihl.

It has been noticed above that Herac-  
lius sent reinforcement for the relief of  
the Roman garrison at Damascus which, however,  
could not find its way to its destination. These  
forces together with some others were therefore  
directed towards Ardan as the next rallying point.  
Khālīd advanced that way and encamped at Fihl.  
Impressed by the determination and perseverance  
of the Muslims, the Christians made advances for  
peace. Khālīd deputed Mu'ādh to discuss peace  
terms. During the discussion, the Christians  
trying to overawe the Muslim envoy referred  
to their large army and abundance of supplies.  
Mu'ādh in reply quoted the Quranic verse :  
"How often has a small party vanquished a  
numerous host by God's permission" (2 : 249).  
No agreement, however, could be arrived at with  
regard to peace terms. The Muslims' demand  
was the same as in the case of Persia,  
whereas the Christians were only trying to buy  
them off. The following day, a Christian envoy  
came to the Muslim camp with the offer of two  
dinars per head to the whole army, provided it  
should depart. The matter was at length referred  
to the arbitration of the sword. A bloody battle  
was fought in which the Romans, 50,000 strong,  
were defeated. Muir places this battle before the  
capture of Damascus. This victory brought the

whole of the territory of Ardan into the possession of Muslims. Wherever the people surrendered, the Muslims guaranteed them, as some of the terms of peace, perfect protection of their lives and property and of their churches. The only condition on the Muslim side was that some pieces of land would be utilized for the erection of mosques.

**Battle of Hims.**

After the capture of Ardan, the Muslim army advanced towards Hims, and after some feeble resistance this town also surrendered. From here Khālid proceeded further up, but instructions from the Caliph stopped him from pushing any further. This also shows that all that the Muslims wanted was to take possession of the places which originally formed part of Arabia, and with that to bring warfare to a close. Consequently, the whole army retraced its steps. Abū 'Ubaida encamped at Hims, 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ at Ardan, whereas Khālid returned to Damascus.

**Battle of Yarmuk,  
A. H. 15, A. D.  
636.**

The Cæsar felt greatly crestfallen at the fall of three important centres like Damascus, Ardan and Hims, and with full enthusiasm began to raise a large army. Couriers rushed to all parts of the empire with the orders that all available men must at once be sent up. A huge

army gathered together at Antioch. When news of this came to the Muslim camp, Abū 'Ubaida forthwith held a council of his officers. It was unanimously agreed upon that the situation was extremely critical, and for a small army like theirs, it was not possible to withstand the daily swelling tide of the enemy's ranks. Nor was there any prospect of reinforcement arriving from Medīna in the near future. The territory occupied, it was decided, must be evacuated. This was accordingly done. Abū 'Ubaida gave up his position at Hims and returned towards Damascus. On leaving Hims, however, he ordered that the whole amount of Jizya, realised from the people of Hims, must be returned to them. Jizya, he said, was a tax in return for the protection of the people. When they could no longer afford them that protection, they had no right to keep that money. The whole amount was consequently withdrawn from the treasury and made over to the people who were shortly to fall into the hands of the enemy, and who were all either Christians or Jews. In vain will the critic rummage the dusty pages of history for another such brilliant spot, such scrupulous regard for the rights of citizenship in time of war. The treatment of Muslims towards the inhabitants was such that at their departure, the Christians as well as the Jews

actually shed tears and prayed God to bring them back. Muir, after admiring the leniency of the Arab conquerors towards the conquered and their justice and integrity, quotes a Nestorian Bishop of the time: "These Arabs to whom God has accorded in our days the dominion are become our masters; but they do not combat the Christian religion; much rather they protect our faith; they respect our priests and our holy men, and make gifts to our churches and our convents" (p. 128).

The retreat from Hims had its repercussion in other parts as well. Some parts of Ardan also had to be evacuated. The armies of Abū 'Ubaida and 'Amr-bin-Āṣ rallied at Yarmūk. Some reinforcement previously despatched from Medīna also arrived there. The total strength of the Muslim army was between thirty to forty thousand. The Romans marched down on them with a large force of two hundred thousand. Before the commencement of hostilities, there were some negotiations for peace. The Romans again tried to buy them off. The Muslims wanted payment of tribute as recognition of defeat. What unwavering fortitude! Two hundred thousand are ready to fall upon them but their faith is unshaken. Truth, they say, must triumph. At length a bloody battle ensued



in which even Muslim ladies participated. The Muslims were repulsed several times, and once they were thrust back to their encampment from where the ladies reproached them and hurled them on once more against the foe. They fought desperately, not one caring a bit for his life, each trying to excel others in valour and rushing into the very ranks of the enemy. The Romans lost their footing and took to their heels. Three thousand Muslim martyrs fell on the field. The number of Christian casualties was very large. When Hercules heard of the defeat, he left for Constantinople.

The battle of Yarmūk occupies the same position in the Syrian campaign as that of Qādisiyya in the Persian. Like Qādisiyya it was a decisive battle. Thereafter, all the Syrian towns surrendered one by one, Qinnasrīn, Ḥalb, Antioch and so forth. Some of the people joined the faith of Islam but the bulk of the population stuck to Christianity and paid Jizya. The people of one place, Jarjoma, neither embraced Islam nor paid any Jizya. Peace was concluded with them on the condition that if needed, they would fight on the Muslim side. This treaty shows that the Muslims wanted nothing but peace and tranquillity, and it was only to establish permanent peace that they were fighting.

Jerusalem capi-  
tulates, 15 A. H.,  
Jan. 637.

When Abū Bakr first sent an expedition to Syria, he divided the army into three or four divisions, each to advance to a particular part of the country. The division under the command of 'Amr-bin-Āṣ was detailed for the province of Palestine, but he was repeatedly required to leave his own front and go over to Damascus to reinforce the small Muslim force engaged in action there. Jerusalem, therefore, had not so far been captured. After the fall of Yarmūk, the Muslim forces were not much in requisition in that part. Siege was therefore laid to Jerusalem. Over and above these forces, Abū 'Ubaida also, relieved of his campaign in the north, turned to the help of the besiegers. When Arṭabūn (Aretion) heard of this, he cleared off to Egypt along with his army. This incident, by the way, is worth noting in connection with the conquest of Egypt later on. The inhabitants of Jerusalem offered to capitulate on the condition that the Caliph should in person come over and sign the treaty. The holy temple at Jerusalem being the sanctuary of the Israelite prophets, the Muslims respected it as they respected those prophets. 'Umar, therefore, held a consultation and it was decided that the condition should be accepted. Consequently, 'Umar left Medīna for Jerusalem.

This journey of one who was the King not only of Arabia but also of Mesopotamia and Syria is unique for its simplicity. In the same simple coarse dress as he usually wore, with no large retinue, 'Umar set out with just a few men, entrusting the affairs of state to the care of 'Alī. Khālīd and other officers received him at Jābiya. He was, however, much displeased at the rich costumes they were wearing, and when one was brought for him, he refused to put it on, retaining his usual simple dress. The treaty was drawn up and signed, and it is reproduced below to show the treatment of the Muslims towards people of other persuasions :—

Treaty of Jerusalem.

"This is the covenant of peace which 'Umar, the servant of God and the commander of the faithful, made with the people of Jerusalem. This peace which is vouchsafed to them guarantees them protection of life, of property, of churches, of crosses, of those who set up, display and honour these crosses. Their churches shall not be used as dwelling houses, nor shall they be dismantled, nor shall they or their compounds, their crosses and their belongings be in any way damaged. They shall be subjected to no compulsion in matters of faith, nor shall they be in any way molested. No Jews shall reside with them in Jerusalem. It is incumbent on the

people of Jerusalem that they should pay the Jizya as people of other towns do. They must also turn out the Greeks and the robbers. Whoever of the Greeks leaves the town, his life and property shall be protected till he should reach a place of safety, and whoever should stay in Jerusalem, he shall be protected and he must pay Jizya like the rest of the inhabitants. And whoever should wish to go away with the Greeks and leave behind their churches and crucifixes, there is protection for them as well. Their lives, properties, churches and crosses shall be protected till they reach a place of safety. Whatever is contained in this deed is under the covenant of God and His Apostle and under the guarantee of his successors and the faithful, as long as the inhabitants pay the Jizya."

This treaty was drawn up in the year 15 A. H., and was signed by Khālid-bin-Walīd, 'Amr-bin-Āṣ, 'Abdur Raḥmān-bin-'Auf and Mu'āwiya as witnesses. The signature of Khālid on this document may, by the way, be helpful in removing a doubtful point of chronology as to when this renowned general was called back by 'Umar. This evidence should establish it for certain that till the year 15 A. H., at least, he was still holding his exalted position; otherwise, in his stead there should have been the signature of Abū 'Ubaida.

Christian historians have recorded that when the Christian Patriarch was showing round the Caliph the antiquities of the town, the hour for Muslim prayers arrived. At that time they were within a most ancient church, the church of Resurrection. The Patriarch offered that the Caliph might say his prayers there. He refused the kindly offer with thanks, saying his prayers neither there nor in the famous church of Constantine where prayer-carpet had already been spread out. "Should we say our prayers here," he observed, "the Muslims might some day claim to erect a mosque in this place." With such scrupulousness he protected the sanctity of Christian places of worship from violation even at some future time. This is the example of toleration, it must be remembered, set by the immediate disciples of the Prophet. If during the long history of Islam, some Muslim conqueror may have transgressed the limit, Islam can not justly be held responsible for it.

Greek efforts to  
expel Muslims  
from Syria, 17  
A.H., 638 A. D.

In the year 17 A.H., the Cæsar, at the instigation of the people of Jazīra, made another attempt to regain possession of Syria. Jazīra is the territory situated to the north of Mesopotamia. The Muslim armies, after the subjugation of Mesopotamia, never advanced beyond, neither to the north nor to the east. The Caliph did not want to

take one step beyond what was indispensable in the interest of the defence of Arabia. Syria was conquered but not a soldier was marched into the neighbouring province of Asia Minor—a country in no way inferior to Syria in point of natural wealth and beauty. And what is more, the power of Islam had by now immensely increased and money was abundant. But territorial extension was never the object of Muslims. They were fighting for the protection of their homeland, and now that this object was achieved and the dismembered Arab tribes were re-amalgamated with the motherland, all warfare was stopped. But their enemies would not let them rest. After every defeat, they at once set to planning another attack. Consequently at the invitation of the people of Jazīra, the Cæsar once more landed his troops on the soil of Syria, by the sea-route. Antakiya opened its gates to the invaders. Qinnasrīn, Ḥalb and other northern towns also rose in open revolt. The people of Jazīra advanced with an army 30,000 strong. It was a critical situation. Abū 'Ubaida rallied whatever troops he could at Ḥims, at the same time sending urgent word to the Caliph. Couriers were hurried in all directions with instructions that all available forces must at once proceed to the help of Abū 'Ubaida. The situation was so serious that the Caliph in person set out

for Syria. In the meantime, however, tables were turned. Under orders from Medīna, a division of Muslim army advanced on Jazīra. These people were now alarmed at the safety of their own home. The Arab tribes that had mustered to the help of the Greeks also repented and secretly sent word to Khālid promising to withdraw their forces. The Muslims wasted no time in taking advantage of the weakened position of the foe. Without waiting for reinforcements from Mesopotamia or Medīna, Abū 'Ubaida led the attack. The enemy forces were once more routed.

**Conquest of Jazira.** It was necessary to punish this transgression on the part of the people of Jazīra. 'Umar consequently ordered Sa'd to invade that territory. The Muslim army was small but the people of Jazīra having suffered a reverse along with Cæsar's army did not consider it worth while to offer any serious resistance. A few skirmishes were all that took place here and there, and thus in the year 17 A.H. Jazīra was added to the possessions of Islam.

**Removal of Khālid, 17 A.H.** It would not be out of place, while narrating the events of the year 17 A.H., to touch upon two other important incidents of the same year. One of these is the removal of Khālid from command. There is no doubt about the fact that 'Umar did not like the policy of

Khālid in connection with warfare. As early as the Arab rising after the Prophet's death, Khālid's treatment with Mālik-bin-Nuwaira had given cause for offence, and though Khālid's explanation was accepted by Abū Bakr, 'Umar was not satisfied. Oftentimes Khālid was unduly severe on the field of battle, which 'Umar positively disliked. Nevertheless, on assuming the reins of government, he adopted as mild an attitude towards that general as possible and did not in any way interfere with him. His signature as witness on the treaty of Jerusalem shows that up to the conquest of that town, Khālid was in chief command of the Syrian army. It was after this that in consequence of his refusal to render account for an item of expenditure, he was removed from command and put under Abū 'Ubaida. In the year 17 A. H., Khālid gave an award of a thousand dinars to a certain poet. 'Umar disliked this extravagance and called for an explanation. At first, Khālid refused to give an explanation on which the Caliph ordered Bilāl to handcuff him with his own turban—a mark that he was adjudged guilty. Then Khālid explained that he had given the money out of his private purse, and as a mark of acquittal, his hands were untied. Such strong handling of a renowned general whose exploits were the wonder of the



world, shows what spirit Islam had breathed into its votaries. The man at the top was as much liable to answer for his conduct as the man at the bottom. This spectacle of human equality as displayed by Islam stands unrivalled in the annals of man. After that, Khālid returned to Medīna and personally pleaded his innocence before 'Umar. The Caliph assured him that he still loved and respected him, at the same time writing to the officers concerned that Khālid had been removed not in consequence of any displeasure incurred by him nor of any misappropriation of funds. The only reason of his removal, he explained, was that he was afraid lest people should attribute the conquests of Islam to Khālid's skill and prowess ; these were all from God.

The other incident worth mention is the epidemic of plague which broke out at 'Amwās in Syria in 17 A. H., and infected even Mesopotamia, continuing till 18. A. H. To devise some preventive measures, 'Umar again set out for Syria. Abū 'Ubaida and others came out some distance to receive the Caliph. On hearing all about the epidemic from the commander-in-chief, 'Umar called a council of the companions to think over the situation. A saying of the Prophet was

Plague of  
'Amwas 17-18  
A. H.

also brought to his notice forbidding a fresh comer to visit a place stricken with plague as well as one already there to leave that place for another. Acting up to this, the Caliph gave up the idea of proceeding any further. "Are you running away from the decree of God?" objected Abū 'Ubaida. "Yes," replied the Caliph, "from one decree I am running away to another decree," meaning that if one place is plague-stricken according to the decree of God, another is safe by the same decree. Abū 'Ubaida was instructed to shift his troops from the low land where they were encamped and scatter them over hill tops. He gave immediate effect to the orders, but for himself it was too late. He had already caught the infection to which he succumbed while yet on the way. His death was followed by that of another illustrious companion, Mu'ādh-bin-Jabal. At length, 'Amr-bin-Āṣ had the troops scattered over mountains and thus the epidemic was checked, but only after it had taken a toll of 25,000 lives from among the Muslims. 'Umar's order to remove the troops from the infected area throws light on the true significance of the Prophet's words. All that the Prophet meant was that people in infected area must not carry the infection to other inhabited places. The idea was to check the spread of the epidemic.

It was by no means intended that those infected with plague must perish where they were. To remedy the ravages of plague, 'Umar undertook a journey to Syria for the third time. On the way he stopped at Ayla at the head of the Gulf of 'Aqaba as the guest of the bishop of the place. The Caliph's shirt which had got torn on the journey was stitched by the bishop with his own hands. This shows what friendly relations existed at that time between Muslims and Christians. In this very year, *i. e.* A. H. 18, Arabia was visited with the calamity of a terrible famine, in which the Caliph in person did relief work like a common labourer.

<sup>Egypt invaded,</sup>  
19 A.H., 640 A.D. The third time when 'Umar visited Syria in connection with the wreckage of plague, 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ who was in command of the army at the time asked permission to invade Egypt. History does not record the circumstances that called for such an expedition. But the silence of history must by no means be misconstrued to imply that there were no weighty reasons for such a measure, that it was just a passion for territorial extension, or as some Christian historians have put it, the army's idleness called for some occupation. It has just been noticed that a most virulent epidemic had wrought havoc in the Muslim army, having

thinned its ranks by no less than 25,000. The danger of an invasion by the Cæsar had not as yet disappeared. Under these circumstances, the Muslims could ill afford to quit Syria. It was, as Sir William Muir puts it, after much hesitation that the Caliph gave his consent. And what was the army with which 'Amr-bin-Āṣ set out to invade Egypt? Just 4,000 strong! No sane general would, with such a force and under such circumstances, venture out on an expedition of such magnitude, without some urgent reasons. The apprehension, it seems, was that the Cæsar was about to march on Syria through Egypt and it was to check this advance that 'Umar permitted his Syrian commander to proceed to Egypt. The last invasion of the Cæsar at the invitation of the people of Jazīra, in which the Muslims lost Antioch, had also been made from Alexandria, the famous sea-port of Egypt. And it is likely that this time, the invasion was again contemplated by that route. It must be recollected in this connection that while 'Amr was advancing on Jerusalem in the year A. H. 15, Arṭabūn had withdrawn his troops to Egypt. These troops were still there, for the name of this same Arṭabūn is mentioned in connection with the siege of Fustāṭ. It is recorded that when Muḡauqis concluded a truce for five days,

Arṭabūn was against it. Thus the permission for invasion was neither asked for, nor given, light-heartedly. Dark clouds of danger were gathering in Egypt. Arṭabūn with his troops was there. The Cæsar had previously invaded Syria through Egypt. He might have been planning another invasion from that quarter.

Fall of Fustat, 19 A.H., 640 A.D. In fine, 'Amr marched out against Egypt towards the close of the year 18 A. H., with only 5,000 men under his command. The army being too small, the Caliph had an idea to recall 'Amr, but he had already reached Egypt. Consequently some reinforcement was despatched to his help under the command of Zubair. 'Amr reached the Egyptian frontier by the route of Wādi al-'Arīsh on Dhulḥajj 10, 18 A. H., corresponding to December 12, 639. After encounters at a few towns on the way, such as Faramā, Bilbeis etc., siege was at last laid to Fustāt. This was a most strongly fortified fort on the bank of the Nile with the royal army for its garrison. The siege lasted for seven months. At last Zubair with a handful of men scaled the wall of the fort by means of a ladder and fell on the besieged with shouts of *Allāh-o-Akbar*. The Christians were siezed with terror and laid down arms. The entire garrison was granted amnesty. Thus in

the year 19 A. H., the lower part of Egypt got dismembered from the Roman Empire, and came into the possession of the Muslims.

Fall of Alexandria, 20 A. H., 641 A. D.

Hearing of the fall of Fustāt, the Cæsar landed another division of troops at Alexandria. 'Amr also obtained the Caliph's permission to advance on that port. On the way, the combined forces of Romans and Egyptians opposed the Muslim advance but were repulsed. Siege was at length laid to Alexandria. Communication by the sea was, however, maintained unbroken by the enemy, and the besieged received regular supplies. The siege consequently dragged on for a considerable length of time. But at last the town was captured in 20 A. H. corresponding to 641 A. D., and the whole of Egypt thus came into the possession of Muslims. On instructions from the Caliph, Fustāt was made the capital. Alexandria, however, had been left without any strong garrison, and finding it thus exposed, the Cæsar, during the reign of 'Uthmān, once more captured it with his fleet. In the year 25 A. H., 'Amr-bin-'Ās wrested it from the Romans once more.

Library of Alexandria.

In connection with the conquest of Alexandria, one is naturally reminded of its famous library and the common allegation that it was burnt to ashes at the instance

of 'Umar. Gibbon's conclusions are positive on the point. This famous historian has proved that the library was burnt long before the Muslim conquest of the town. Muir also exonerates the Muslim conquerors from this charge. "The story of the burning of the library of Alexandria by the Arabs," says he, "is a late invention."

Besides his most brilliant exploits  
The Suez Canal. in the field of arms, one of the great achievements of 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ worth recording was in the field of engineering. At the instance of 'Umar, he had a canal dug, connecting the waters of the Nile with the Red Sea. This canal was very useful in transporting the corn of Egypt to Yanbū, 'the Arabian sea port on the Red Sea. It remained navigable for eighty years after which, getting filled up with sand, it became unserviceable.

Campaign in  
 Khuzistan 16-19  
 A. H., 637-641  
 A. D.

"Turning once more to the eastern provinces of the Caliphate we find the cautious policy of 'Umar still tending to restrain the Muslim arms within the limits of the Arabian 'Irāq, or the country bounded by the Western slopes of the Persian range. But they were soon, by the force of events, to burst the barrier." In these words does Muir admit that the Muslims were averse to carry their arms beyond the limits of Arab

settlements but were actually dragged out by sheer force of circumstances. This is how a new development took place. The Governor of Bahrain, who occupied the western coast of the Persian Gulf, was alarmed at the enemy's movements on the opposite coast. In the face of danger brewing in such proximity, he could not sit still. To nip the hostile movement in the bud, he crossed the gulf and landed his forces on the opposite coast in the year 16 A.H. He, however, found himself caught in the enemy's snare and was not able even to beat a retreat. The Caliph sent a division of army under 'Utba to his rescue. The rescue was effected but the moral effect of the retreat on the neighbouring provinces was disastrous. Hurmuzān, the Governor of Ahwāz, a province near Basra, who had also fought against the Muslims in the battle of Qādisiya and fled back to his own place, now began to give trouble afresh. "He began now to make raids upon the Arab out-posts, and 'Utba resolved to attack him," says Muir. This was in the year 17 A.H. With the help of a Beduin tribe, 'Utba succeeded in ejecting the enemy out of Ahwāz. According to the treaty that was concluded, the province was ceded to the Muslims and entrusted by 'Utba to the same Beduin tribe. Soon after, however, 'Utba died, and Mughīra was appointed



Governor of Basra in his place. Hurmuzān again picked up a quarrel with the Beduin tribe on some frontier dispute, and violating the treaty waged war against the Muslims. He was again defeated and Ahwāz once more fell into the hands of the Muslims. The victorious Muslim army wanted to push their victory forward beyond Ahwāz, but the Caliph again withheld his permission.

Hurmuzān had fled eastward but was again granted immunity by the Muslims. This happened in the year 18 A.H. Shortly after this, the defeated Persian monarch Yazdejird, who had taken refuge in Merv, sent his emissaries into Persia, rousing the populace to insurrection. The attitude of Hurmuzān again became dubious, and consequently in the year 19 A. H. the Caliph sent orders to the forces of Kūfa and Baṣra to march against him under the command of Nu'mān. With a large Persian army, Hurmuzān gave battle at Rām Hurmuz but was "once" again defeated, taking refuge in the castle of Shustar, some fifty miles to the north of Ahwāz. The castle remained besieged for several months. At last discovering a secret entrance, the Muslim soldiers entered the castle and captured it. Hurmuzān gave himself up on the condition that he would be guaranteed a safe conduct to the

presence of the Caliph who might deal with him as he should please.

Hurmuzan be- When brought before 'Umar,  
comes a Muslim. Hurmuzān was dressed in the most gorgeous regal robes, followed by a long train of courtiers and attendants. The triumphant king, on the other hand, was at the time lying stretched on the ground wearing a coarse shirt. Pretty long contact with the Muslims had already acquainted Hurmuzān with the virtues of Islam. Now beholding with his own eyes the sublime simplicity of the Caliph, the truth of Islam instantaneously sank into his heart. What wonderful force, he said to himself, which should thus make man indifferent to worldly attractions, which had thus transformed the master of those kingdoms and countless treasures into a hermit to whom gold and diamonds were no more than dust. The wealthiest king, yet leading the life of an indigent recluse! Thus musing within himself his heart had already fallen a prey to the fascinating force of Islam, but he would not as yet declare his faith fearing lest this may be suspected as a subterfuge to save his skin. The king seated on the throne of dust, on his side, was revolving in his mind the repeated treachery of the vanquished foe of the gorgeous costume and he did so in a mood of deep anguish. At last he spoke out:

"To pardon a man who has been the cause of shedding so much of Muslim blood! Impossible!" Hurmuzān thereupon begged for a cup of water which was given him. He hesitated. "How can I drink this water," he said, "unless I am assured that I would not be slain even before that." "You are safe," rejoined the Caliph, "till you have drunk the cup." Forthwith he let the cup drop on the ground, saying that according to the pledged word of the Caliph, he could not be killed. 'Umar was surprised at the trick. Now that he was safe and his position secure against any suspicion, he recited aloud the *kalima*, saying that he was already a Muslim.

Ban against advance on Persia withdrawn, 641 A. D.

'Umar had issued strict orders to stop all advance towards Persia. A deputation of Muslims waited upon him to implore him to withdraw the prohibition. Thus Muir writes: "The deputation which, along with the spoil of Tostar, carried Al-Hurmuzān a prisoner to Mēdīna, throws light upon the reasons that weighed with the Caliph to withdraw his long standing embargo on a forward movement...."

"What is the cause," inquired 'Umar of the deputation, "that these Persians persistently break faith and rebel against us? Maybe, ye treat them harshly." "Not so," they answered;

"but thou hast forbidden us to enlarge our boundary, and the King is in their midst to stir them up. Two kings can in no wise exist together until the one expel the other. It is not our harshness, but their king, that has incited them to rise against us after having made submission. And so it will go on until thou shalt remove the barrier and leave us to go forward and expel their king. Not till then will their hopes and machinations cease." The demand, continues the historian, was supported even by Hurmuzān and at last the Caliph was convinced that restriction ought to be removed. To quote from Muir again, "The truth began to dawn on 'Umar that necessity was laid upon him to withdraw the ban against advance. In self-defence, nothing was left but to crush the Chosroes and to take entire possession of his realm." And yet again, "He was compelled at last by the warlike attitude of the Persian court to bid his armies take the field with the avowed object of dealing the empire a final blow." These last words from the pen of a Christian historian are so clear, and yet in the face of this positive admission, 'Umar is accused, for his subjugation and annexation of Persia, of the lust of loot and territorial extension. He was by no means inclined to resort to such a measure but, if allowed any longer lease, Persia

would certainly have gathered strength and crushed Arabia. Circumstances thus forced the Caliph's reluctant hand.

Battle of Nihāwand and conquest of Persia, 22 A.H., 643 A. D.

As already stated, Yazdejird, was fanning, from his refuge at Merv through his agents, the fire of another war against the Muslims, over the length and breadth of Persia. He succeeded in enlisting the co-operation even of some independent kingdoms. A huge army, 150,000 strong, was rallied at Hamdān, with Firozān in chief command. Sa'd kept the Caliph informed of this general mobilization. The advance of this army would have been most dangerous to the Muslims. A counter-army was immediately raised and marched to Hulwān under the command of Nu'mān. A little ahead at a place called Nihāwand, the two armies met in the year 22 A.H. Nu'mān was killed in the action but the laurels of victory fell to the Muslims. Most of the enemy's army perished. From Nihāwand, the Muslim army advanced on Ray. In the meanwhile, Yazdejird fled to Isphahān and thence on to Kirmān, finally taking refuge in Balkh. At Ray, the Persian army gave another battle under Isfandiyār but was as usual defeated. Yazdejird was still active. With the help of the Tartars and the Chinese he kept up some show of fighting,

but all to no purpose. In the meantime, Muslim forces had spread over the whole of Persia. Fāris, Makrān, Sajistān, Khurāsān, Āzarbaijān, all provinces were one by one taken possession of. Thus came the whole of Persia completely under the rule of Islam. It is worthy of note that on this occasion while the tax known as Jizya was imposed in some parts, there were other parts side by side where the people neither embraced Islam nor paid any Jizya. They only agreed to render military assistance in time of need. Peace with Jurjān, for instance, was concluded on this very condition, *viz.*, that such of the people who would assist the Muslims in withstanding a foreign invasion would be exempt from Jizya. Likewise Shahr Barāz, an Armenian chief, concluded peace on the condition of military assistance and exemption from Jizya. Kirmān and Sīstān were conquered in the year 23 A. H.

**Death of 'Umar'** 'Umar met his death at the hands of 23 A.H. 644 A.D. a Persian slave, Abū Lu'lu' (Firoz) by name, who had, under the influence of his Roman masters, turned Christian. He fell into the hands of Mughīra in Mesopotamia, who on his return home brought him along with himself. Here he one day came with a complaint to the Caliph that his master realized from him two dirhams a day. He was told that this was not

too much for a carpenter, which greatly incensed him. The following day at early dawn when the Caliph was conducting prayers, Abū Lu'lu' slipped forward and stabbed him. With unruffled composure 'Umar made 'Abdur Raḥmān-bin-'Auf, the Imam in his own place and went on with his prayers. The assassin, after murdering some other persons, committed suicide. When after prayers the Caliph was informed that the assailant was a Christian he thanked God that he had not met his death at the hands of a Muslim. The wound was deep; and the bowels had been cut. There was no hope of recovery. The first thing he did was to ask 'Āyesha's permission that he might be buried by the Prophet's side. Then for the election of his successor, he selected six most prominent men—'Uthmān, 'Alī, Zubair, Ṭalḥa, Sa'd-bin-Abī Waqqās, and 'Abdur Raḥmān-bin-'Auf, and left the question in their hands. Whoever from among themselves should these six men, he said, elect by a majority of votes, should be made the Caliph. Then he had the account of his debts brought to him. This, he said, should be paid out of his legacy. Wounded on Dhulḥajj 26, 23 A. H., he passed away after three days' illness, on Muḥarram 1, 24 A. H.

Reasons Under- Of the glorious achievements or  
lying the great 'Umar, what strikes one as the

conquests of most conspicuous, are the great  
'Umar's reign. conquests of Islam. That such a  
vast territory should have been subjugated within  
the brief space of ten years, is by itself a wonder-  
ful phenomenon, the more so when it is borne  
in mind that hostilities were started at one and  
the same time against two most mighty empires,  
each possessed of power enough to trample  
Arabia under foot in days. But one's wonder  
knows no bounds when one beholds that on no  
field did the Muslim army exceed 40 thousand  
whereas the enemy at times put into the field as  
large an army as two hundred and fifty thousand  
strong. Of equipment, the Arabs had not a  
hundredth part of what those empires possessed.  
The enemy, long used to warfare, had a good  
military organization, whereas the Arabs had  
never before seen rallies so vast, nor had they  
ever experienced warfare abroad. In military  
training, the Arabs were as deficient as their  
opponents were skilled in it. Then the battles  
were fought not in Arabia, but on the enemy's  
ground, where they had, besides abundant  
supplies, well-fortified castles. Notwithstanding  
all the odds being on the enemy's side, what a  
wonder that except at Jasr, not once were the  
Muslims defeated! European historians have  
assigned only two reasons for this: firstly, that



the Persian and Roman Empires had considerably degenerated, and secondly that the prospect of spoils, rather of loot as they put it, had roused the martial spirits of the Muslims.

That the empires of Persia and Rome were at the time undergoing a process of decay, though true to a certain extent, does in no way explain the conquests of Islam. They had undoubtedly lost much of their original power and glory. Their civilizations were things of the past and by mutual warfare they had greatly undermined each other's power. But when all this has been said, the question still remains, Were they too weak for Arabia? Certainly not. The Arabs were too insignificant compared to them even in this fallen state. Parts of Arabia were actually under their sway—the northern part under the Cæsar and the eastern under the Chosroes. The Arabs had such terror of them that even in parts other than their possessions, they freely indulged in whatever they pleased. Furthermore, the war was caused by the transgression of these two powers on the frontier. They were obviously conscious of their strength. If they were really weak, as alleged, their weakness should have manifested itself at least in some outward sign. They should have been unable to put enough of

Weakening of  
the Roman and  
Persian Empires.

forces in the field or the soldiers should have been ill-equipped. But history tells a different tale. They brought twice, thrice, nay even five times as large armies as the Muslims did. Of equipment, too, their soldiers had abundant, offensive as well as defensive. Their common soldiers were from head to foot clad in iron. Thus notwithstanding their comparative downfall from their original glory, either of these two empires was still far too formidable for Arabia. Before their combined forces, however, Arabia was absolutely insignificant, and the hostilities were, in a way, against their combined forces, inasmuch as they were carried on simultaneously against each.

False charge of  
love of loot.

In their second explanation of these conquests of Islam, European historians seem to reflect the modern mentality of their own lands, but they have overlooked one most important factor in all expeditions for purposes of loot. Such expeditions are invariably undertaken by the strong against the weak and not *vice versa*. It is a law of physical nature and as such insusceptible of change. Why, does it not work just the same in this twentieth century? Do not the strong nations of Europe dominate over the weaker nations of the world under our own eyes exploiting all the resources of their soil for their

own aggrandizement? What is this but a more refined and hence less palpable form of loot? Such is this immutable law of physical nature. But, on the contrary, the history of mankind presents not one instance where a weak nation might have got up against a strong one with a view of robbing it. All robbers take good care to see that their victim is not their superior in strength. No robbers would run the risk of way-laying a well-equipped army, knowing it to be so. Then there is another consideration which makes this explanation untenable. Love of money invariably begets love of life. People out for loot are incapable of any feats of valour such as were displayed by the Muslims. Their foremost consideration is not to compromise their own safety in any way. The reckless courage with which the Muslims fought the foe in these wars, regardless of life and death, should convince any fair-minded man, that sordid love of loot could not inspire such invincible courage. Undoubtedly, these men must have been inspired by a far nobler passion which made them oblivious of all personal considerations. To take up arms against Persia and Rome was, humanly speaking, to run into the very jaws of death, and no band of mere robbers could possibly think of it. It must have been something far higher that banished all

fear of death from the hearts of Muslims. It was their high sense of duty.

*Glorious deeds of Muslim soldiers.* A brief summary such as this is hardly the place to sketch in any great detail the most remarkable feats of valour, determination and self-sacrifice that the Muslim soldiers displayed in these battles. The chapter they added to the history of warfare is resplendent with the most glorious deeds. To point to just a few, let us take the reader to the field of Jarr where the Muslims suffered a defeat. Crossing the bridge, they find the enemy in battle array in a narrow space. In the forefront is the wall of elephants with loudly ringing bells hanging about them. The Arab steeds unused to such strange scene take fright and wheel round. Forthwith Abū 'Ubaida, the commander, leaps down, sabre in hand. His example is followed by others. But for poor mortals to push back this moving wall is no easy task. Nevertheless the reckless daring with which they charged these giants is a sight for the gods to behold and admire. Sword in hand, Abū 'Ubaida dashes against this wall and grapples with one of the beasts. The elephant pulls him down and with his stupendous weight crushes the very bones of his body. A sight that would have unmanned one with the strongest nerve only inspires greater

courage in others. The dead commander's brother rushes to the scene, takes hold of the standard and dashes against the same animal. He meets with the same fate. Another follows and likewise falls. Another and yet another till seven most valiant men thus get crushed underneath that one beast. At the battle of Qādisiya, Ṭulaiḥa rushed single-handed into the ranks of the enemy, 60,000 strong, in the dark of the night, and dealing death right and left, came back with a prisoner of war. At this very field, Abū Miḥjan, the famous poet, yet a brave man, was one day found drunk and consequently put in the camp prison. As the battle raged hot, he beheld from his dungeon that the Persians through their numerical superiority were pushing the Muslims back. He could not bear the sight. His blood boiled within him and he implored Salma, the commander's wife, to unfetter him, promising to be back and put the same fetters on, in case he survived. No sooner was he released than like a lion uncaged he rushed upon the foe, sweeping rank after rank before him. In the evening when the battle stopped, he returned to the camp and with his own hands put the same fetters on. When Sa'd, the commander, who had seen his daring deeds, came to know of it, he at once ordered his fetters to be taken off. A man of

such daring and such spirit of self-sacrifice, he observed, could not be kept a prisoner. Abū Miḥjan's response was equally noble; he took an oath that never again would he touch a drop of wine. Madāin was the scene of similar feats of fearless valour. The first man to throw his horse into the deep and rapid stream of the Tigris was the commander, Sa'd, himself. Others followed suit, one by one, as if it were no more than a gallop on a level race-course, and this under the very eyes of the enemy watching from the opposite bank. At Fihl, in one of the Syrian battles, the centre of the enemy's army was repeatedly attacked by the Muslims but would not budge an inch from its position. Hashām-bin-'Utba, commander of a detachment, jumped off his horse-back, darted into the centre, swearing that either he would fix the standard of Islam there or perish in the attempt. At Hims, Shuraḥbīl advanced alone towards the town. He was attacked by a troop of cavalry but he fought stubbornly, killed eleven men and put the whole troop to flight. At Yarmūk, when 'Ikrama-bin-Abī Jahl saw the Muslims hard pressed, his spirits were aroused. In his former days, he said, he had been fighting even against the Prophet. How could that day his steps recede before the infidels? Four hundred men fired with his

enthusiasm also pledged to lay down their lives to repulse the foe. They dashed against the enemy and it was the fiercest dash ever made. They fought a desperate fight and fell to the last man but the enemy was repulsed. On another occasion, Shuraḥbīl, while surrounded by the enemy and fighting all single-handed, was heard, while thus fighting, reciting the Quranic verse: "God has purchased of the faithful their lives and their property in return for this that they shall have paradise." And while thus reciting the verse he was calling aloud: "Let those who will have this Divine bargain come forward!" The Muslims had been pressed so far back as the female camp, but this supernatural call rallied them once more to the onslaught and the advancing enemy was hurled back. A most soul-stirring scene that the eye of man has seen, all around, wives urging their husbands and mothers their dearest sons to lay down their lives rather than take one step back!

Muslims' sense of duty.

The rank and file of Muslims, as these few events illustrate, were imbued with just one feeling, which made them accomplish such prodigies of valour and which removed from their hearts all fear of the overwhelming odds against them, the feeling of confidence that in the eye of God it was their

foremost duty to fight. They were swayed by just one passion, *viz.*, to do what God wanted them to do. Called upon in the name of God, they cared not for their lives, nor could the love of wives and children swerve them from the path of duty. Worldly riches were insignificant in their eyes. At that moment they were under the spell of just one all-consuming passion—the love of God. Every other consideration sank into insignificance before it. The nation brought into being by the master-hand of the Prophet was characterised by two outstanding qualities. He had firmly implanted into their hearts faith in the existence of God, and he had infused into them a high sense of duty, which, to them, meant no more nor less than obedience to the will of the Lord. Their faith in God, deep-rooted as it was, served as a never-failing battery of power which electrified the whole of their beings. They were certainly not a nation who would cause so much as a pin-prick to another for nothing. Far from it. They even put up with much at the hands of others with forgiving generosity. When, however, things were carried to an extreme and attempts were made to wipe truth out of existence, they behaved as lions. This exactly was the life drama of the Prophet himself. Personal persecution, ridicule, molesta.



tion, hardship—he submitted to all with patience and fortitude without ever thinking of striking back. But when the enemy, not content with that, actually unsheathed the sword to extirpate Islam, he was not the man to stand aside. With all his might and main—there was not much of it though—he came out to defend the truth. Three hundred against 1000, 700 against 3,000, 1,500 against 15,000,—inspite of such disparity in numerical strength, it was not for him to shirk or shrink. These two words were not of Islamic origin. A tower of moral strength, though physically weak, he triumphed in spite of the odds against him.

In the early Caliphate wars, the same drama was being reacted. The Muslims never offered any molestation to their powerful neighbours. When, however, these neighbours puffed up with the pride of their vast physical resources rose to destroy the independence of Arabia, the Muslims, undaunted either by their numbers or their money, made short work of them, and in the course of a few years the whole face of the map was changed. Their lives were a practical commentary on the Quranic verse: "How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by God's permission" (2: 249). They demonstrated that success depends neither on numbers,

nor on provisions, but on the strength of heart born of a firm faith in God. As a matter of fact, they were a living proof of His existence. Humanity does not know what a tremendous force true faith in God is. It is generally dismissed as superstition. These early sons of Islam, nevertheless, demonstrated for all the world to see that though God is invisible, the great miracles that were wrought through connection with Him, revealed Him too obviously to deny. Thus the true secret of the success of Muslims during the reigns of Abū Bakr and 'Umar lay in their force of conviction. It is true they had, in this respect, a great advantage over the coming generations of Islam. They had with their own eyes seen the whole drama of the Prophet's life, they had seen how a man all alone arose to proclaim the name of the Lord, how not only his immediate relations but the whole of the country, idolaters, Jews and Christians, made common cause against him, how all their opposition melted away, how all that had been said in a state of helplessness ultimately came out true—they had watched this drama with their very eyes, and small wonder a spark of the same faith kindled their own hearts. Moreover, through the same prophetic lips, they had also heard that just as the opposition of the Arabs

had, rather than injure Islam, served as manure to help forward its growth and development, in like manner, the aggressions of the Cæsar and the Chosroes would only bring about the downfall of their own empires? They had this happy prophecy from the Prophet's own lips, and filled with the conviction of its truth, what did they care for the vast numbers of the Persians and Romans, or their abundance of provisions?

Strength of  
character of the  
Muslim soldiers.

It is undoubtedly true that these conquests brought the Muslims immense wealth, and of this wealth they gladly availed themselves. But the fact remains that their hearts were free of all attachment to riches. The one dominating passion of the love of God had elevated them far above all worldly attractions. Not that they were a race of hermits who would have nothing to do with the world and all the good things of this life. They lived this life and lived it in the fullest measure. They looked upon wealth as one of the gifts of God and appreciated it. But they never put their hearts in it. They knew too well that a nation devoted to the worship of mammon, in the long run, becomes bankrupt in high morals. Many a time the Caliph 'Umar, when war-spoils were brought before him, expressed his sorrow. In the wake of these

worldly riches, he was afraid, might come their concomitants, ease and jealousy. Neither the fabulous wealth of the two richest empires, nor the heaps of other things that fell into the hands of Muslims as fair prize of war, made the faintest impression on 'Umar. In the midst of all these appurtenances of luxury that would have dazzled the eyes of any mortal, he had, within his bosom, the same old heart which the Prophet had filled with the love of God, while without him, on his person, he had the same coarse, patched up costume of the days of need and poverty. Such was this Caliph, Emperor of Islam, 'Umar the Great, conqueror of three kingdoms. In fact, this same rigid simplicity and detachment from splendour of the world, characterised all those who had sat at the feet of the Prophet, and learnt the true meaning of life from his lips. When these pupils of the Prophet found themselves transplanted, on diplomatic missions as ambassadors or envoys, from the scene of the stark simplicity of Arabia to the gorgeous splendours of the courts of the Cæsars and the Chosroes, their equanimity of mind was not disturbed by the faintest ripple? To them it was no more than a huge farce, dazzling yet hollow. Clad in garments worn and torn and with swords having no better scabbards than a

few rags, slung across their shoulders, they would walk across these magnificent halls as calm and composed as if moving about in one of the dusty streets of Medina. Rather than being in any way impressed with the imposing spectacles of the courts of the Cæsar and the Chosroes, the gay courtiers of those emperors were struck, as these Muslims entered, with awe at their sublime simplicity. Before the battle of Qādisiya, a Muslim deputation waited on Yazdejird, the King of Persia. The king in a contemptuous tone reminded them that they were a low race, and whenever they gave any trouble, a handful of border peasants were sent to put them right. On this Mughīra-bin-Zarāra sprang to his feet and replied that the king was right, that they were indeed a fallen and misguided people, ever quarrelling among themselves and plunged in vice, but ever since God had raised a Prophet in their midst, they were purged of all those evils and elevated to that high position. Rabī-bin-Āmir was sent to negotiate with Rustam, the Persian Commander-in-chief. And what was the uniform of this Muslim envoy? For a belt he had a common rope of camel's hair tied around his waist, and from such a belt hung his sabre, the scabbard of which was bandaged in rags. And an attendant? What need had he of

any such luxury? All alone he entered the court, with the steed that had brought him, behind him, and as he entered he slung the bridle of the animal across a gorgeous reclining pillow and walked straight on to the throne at the other end, without heeding in the least all the splendour around him. Again, when Mughīra was deputed on the same mission, he found, on entering, the court in perfect array. He walked straight on and took his seat by the side of Rustam himself. When the courtiers objected to this, he administered them a sound rebuke. "It is not the custom among us," he said, "that one man should be seated on a throne as if he were an object of worship while all the rest should sit below with their heads bowed down". Mu'ādh was sent to the court of Syria. When shown to a seat on the magnificent carpet, he bluntly refused to sit there. "I don't want to sit on a carpet," he said, "that has been prepared by robbing the poor." Thus saying the envoy seated himself on bare ground. The Romans remonstrated saying that they wanted to do him honour, and that that was the place for slaves. "If it is a sign of slavery," he replied, "to sit on the ground, who can be a greater slave of God than myself?" Surprised at this, the courtiers asked him if amongst the Muslims there was

anyone superior to him. "Is it not enough for me," he replied, "that I am not the worst of them all?" The Romans reminded him of their numerical superiority. "Our God," he replied, "says: 'How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host with God's permission.'"

Such were these disciples of the Prophet, far far above terrestrial pomp and glory. Likewise when foreign ambassadors came to the Muslims, they were wonder-struck at their austere simplicity. When a Roman envoy was ushered into the presence of Abū 'Ubaida, the Muslim Commander-in-chief was seated on the ground and examining some specimens of arrows. The officer was dumbfounded when told that the man who was the terror of the Roman army was no other than the one seated before him on the ground. There are hundreds of such incidents recorded which show that from the Commander of the Faithful down to the common soldier, every Muslim was imbued with this humility of spirit, with this indifference to worldly pomp. Their sole greatness lay in their firm faith and high character. Apparently, they were busy wielding the sword, but within their bosoms were hearts, met with not even in the solitudes of hermitages. They were saints in communion with God, though with swords and spears in hand. They knew how to bow to the

glory of God and to the right of man. On one occasion the ladies accompanying the Muslim army were in danger of being attacked by the Christian population, the army itself being engaged with enemy troops. Abū 'Ubaida, the commander, suggested that to meet the exigency, the Christian population should be driven out of the town. A subordinate officer objected, saying they had no right to do so, for they had once pledged them safe residence within the town. Hercules himself once asked his Christian advisers as to the reason why the Muslims had the upper hand, in spite of the fact that they were inferior to the Romans in numbers, in strength and in equipment. After all sorts of explanations, a hoary-headed man spoke out. "The Muslims," he said, "are superior to us in morals. They worship God by night and keep fast by day. They do not oppress any one and consider themselves equals. We, on the other hand, are given to drinking, and to sexual corruption. We care not for our word and we oppress others. The Muslims, therefore, possess great pluck and perseverance which they bring to bear upon anything they undertake." Even in the estimation of the enemy it was the strength of character of the Muslims that brought about his triumph on the battle-field.



Solidarity of Islam. One more characteristic of these pioneer Muslims needs to be mentioned. It is the unique unity and solidarity of Islam. Only a few years back, Arabia was the battle ground of internecine feuds. A house so divided there hardly existed on the face of the earth. Tribe against tribe, clan against clan, rushing at one another's throat on mere trifles and continuing the blood feuds for generations. The most sanguine optimist saw no prospect of any interfusion between these warring and jarring elements. It was indeed nothing short of a miracle that the Prophet out of such discordant and chaotic conditions, evolved, in the course of a few years, a well-knit and well-organised society. Deadly enemies were transformed into close friends and centuries old grudges were transmuted into mutual affection—one of the greatest miracles of the world admitted by historians, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The same tribes and clans that so far sought the lives of one another, now sacrificed their lives for one another. If the life of one was in danger, another came forward to save him at the sacrifice of his own life. If one tribe was in straits, another extricated it by involving itself. The blow aimed at one head was received by another. Soldiers laid down their lives for the officers and officers

for soldiers. There was no such thing as jealousy between two officers or two soldiers as to whom the laurels of victory in a certain battle should go. Even if a subordinate officer pledged his word with the enemy, it was considered a national pledge and as such inviolate. Nay, the obligations accepted by a common soldier were redeemed by all Muslims. Such high sense of national solidarity was one of the chief factors that contributed to the triumph of the Muslim army against overwhelming odds.

**Democratic spirit.** The democracy of Islam, first planted when Abū Bakr took the reins of government into his hands, found growth and development during the caliphate of 'Umar. The seed of democracy was, of course, there in the very principles and teachings of Islam. The Qur'ān had explicitly laid it down as the fundamental law of Muslim polity that the affairs of state should be conducted by consultation and counsel.\* The Prophet himself decided momentous affairs by conferring with his followers. Abū Bakr's very election was the result of a deliberative council of Muslims, and this was throughout the principle also of his rule. During the reign of 'Umar there were two such consultative bodies. The one was a general

\*"And their government is by counsel among themselves" (43 : 38).

assembly which was convened by making a general announcement and where only affairs of special national importance were discussed. For the conduct of daily business, there was a separate committee on a smaller scale. Even matters pertaining to appointment and dismissal of public servants were brought before this working committee. In addition to the deputies from the capital, there were also invited to these deliberations representatives from the outlying parts of the empire. Non-Muslims were also invited to take part in these consultations. For instance, in connection with the management of Mesopotamia, the native Parsi chiefs were consulted, and so was the Muqauqas consulted on the administration of Egypt, and a Copt was invited to the capital as a deputy to represent that country. This principle was extended down to the masses who were consulted on certain state matters. As a rule, provincial governors were appointed after consulting the population. In case of a complaint against a governor by the public, an inquiry commission was duly appointed and the man dismissed if found guilty. Among those thus removed were some most prominent companions. Sa'd, the conqueror of Persia, was dismissed from the governorship of Kūfa on one

such complaint from the people, although there was no serious charge against him. The Caliph's principle was that the governor was the servant of the people, and as such he must have the confidence of those governed. It seems, civilization, at least in this respect, is yet to reach that high mark attained in that golden age thirteen centuries since. Some time, the Caliph would even write to the people to choose their own governor and intimate their choice to him. The people of Kūfa, Syria and Baṣra, for instance, were given this high privilege. Every individual citizen of the state of Islam enjoyed the right to give his opinion and was perfectly free to do so. From the districts came deputations to enlighten the Caliph on the local conditions. In his lectures and sermons, the Caliph laid special emphasis on the point that people must avail of the right of free expression of opinion. This was considered the birth-right, not only of a Muslim, but of every human being. Every possible measure, available under those conditions was adopted to ascertain public opinion. Above all, the position of the Caliph, or the king, was just the position of a common subject. The emoluments granted to the Caliph were on the same scale with others. If sued, the Caliph appeared to defend himself in the public court of

justice just as any other defendant. Once in a dispute with Ubayy-bin-Ka'b, the Caliph appeared as a defendant in the court of Zaid-bin-Thābit. Zaid wanted to show him respect at which 'Umar was displeased, saying this amounted to partiality. Thus under 'Umar the principle of democracy was carried to a point to which it will yet take the world time to attain.

Simple life and  
concern for the  
ruled.

To the early Caliphs of Islam, their kingly positions were not an opportunity to have a good time of it and to eat, drink and be merry. To them it was an office of service to the people involving great sacrifice of personal comfort. In the discharge of his duties as a king, or more appropriately as the greatest servant of the people, 'Umar displayed extraordinary devotion. It may be said that in this respect as well, 'Umar was a mirror reflecting the high sense of duty of his illustrious Master. Just as the Prophet considered no piece of work too low for him? or beneath his dignity, even so did this most devoted disciple of his attend in person to the meanest offices of the state. If the camels of the *Baitul Māl* were taken ill, there was the Caliph with his own hands applying the necessary treatment. If one such camel was lost, there was the Caliph again searching for it in person. During

the Persian wars when times were critical and news from the theatre of war was anxiously looked forward to, he would in person go out for miles to see if a courier was coming. On one occasion when one such courier came with the news of victory, the venerable old Caliph came running back to the capital, keeping pace with the courier's camel and asking him all sorts of questions. It was only when he arrived at his destination that the perplexed courier came to know that the man running on foot by the side of his camel was no other than the Caliph himself. Hurmuzān, a Persian chief, when brought as a captive, was wonder-struck on finding the great Caliph stretched in the mosque on bare ground. On the important occasion of signing the treaty of Jerusalem, he was clad in his usual coarse and patched up clothes, and the officers who implored him to put on a stately costume met with a sound rebuff. The Muslim's dignity, he told them, lay elsewhere than in his dress. When Arabia was stricken by a famine, on his own back the Caliph carried sacks of corn to distribute among the famishing people. At night, he visited the dwellings of the famine-stricken, brought them flour and even helped them in preparing the food. On one such nocturnal visit, he found a woman with nothing

to eat. Her children were crying for bread but she had nothing to give them. Just to console them, she had put a kettle on fire with nothing but water in it. Touched to the quick, the Caliph ran back to Medīna, some three miles from the place, and shortly after returned with a sack of flour on his back. When some one offered to carry the load for him, he simply replied: "In this life you might carry my burden for me, but who will carry my burden on the day of Judgment?" He was ever accessible to the public and in person listened to the meanest troubles of the people. His door was ever open for such complainants. Even the governors had instructions to have no guard at their gates, lest people coming with their troubles might be kept back. For such people they must be at all times accessible. Many a time, 'Umar was harshly treated by others but he would keep quiet. When a certain man repeatedly said to him, "Fear God, O 'Umar," some people wanted to stop him. "Let him say so", said the Caliph, "of what use are these people if they should not tell me such things?" At the dismissal of Khālid, some one stood up and thus addressed him: "O 'Umar! you have not done justice. You have removed a worker of the Prophet and sheathed the sword which the Prophet himself had unsheathed. You

have cut asunder the tie of relationship and have acted jealously towards the son of your uncle." In reply the Caliph simply said : " You have been carried away by passion in support of your brother."

**Treatment of non-Muslims.**

The human sympathies of 'Umar were not confined to the Muslims. He showed just the same charity of heart to Christians and other non-Muslims that came in contact with him. On his death-bed, he enjoined his successor to take particular care of the rights of non-Muslim subjects and not to burden them beyond their capacity. The life and property of a non-Muslim were made as inviolate as those of a Muslim. A Muslim assassin of a Christian was condemned to capital punishment. In affairs of state, non-Muslims were duly consulted. On one occasion on a journey, the Caliph saw that some non-Muslims were worried for non-payment of *Jizya*. On enquiry they were found to be really indigent. The Caliph ordered to let them off. Non-Muslims enjoyed perfect freedom of religion. Even on grave charges of conspiracy and sedition on the part of some non-Muslims, he gave them but light punishment. When the Jews of Khaiber and the Christians of Najrān were, on some such charges, ordered to settle elsewhere, they were at the same time



paid up the full value of their properties from the public treasury. Orders were also issued to allow them special concessions on the journey as well as to exempt them from *Jizya* for some time. Out of the *Zakāt* money raised from Muslims, the Caliph also helped poor Christians. Once, the Caliph saw an old Christian begging for alms. He was not only exempted from *Jizya*, but awarded a subsistence allowance from the public treasury. General orders were then issued that old age pensions must be granted to all the old people among the non-Muslim subjects, who must also be exempt from *Jizya*. Poor-houses for the weak and the disabled were open to the Christians just the same as to Muslims. To consider *Jizya* a hardship is to betray ignorance. The Muslim subjects were, instead, to pay a higher rate of tax, *Zakāt*, and at the same time, they were required to do military service from which non-Muslims were exempt. Is there a Government anywhere to-day in this twentieth century that levies no taxes on its subjects for the maintenance of peace and order? Notwithstanding being a ruling race, the Muslims put up with grave insults from Christians. Once a Christian openly used a foul word of the Prophet in the face of the Muslims. A Muslim just gave him a slap on the face. The case was

brought before 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ, the governor. The Muslim pleaded that in their own churches they might say whatever they liked, but in the public they had no right to use such harsh words about the Prophet. This shows the extent of toleration of Muslims at the time. Of course, things that were likely to disturb public tranquillity were forbidden. For instance, it was forbidden to carry the cross in a procession through Muslim crowds, to blow the church bugle at the prayer hours of Muslims, to carry pigs towards Muslim quarters and so forth. Those who have generalized these prohibitions to mean that the Christians were absolutely forbidden these things are mistaken. Likewise one of the prohibitions was that the children of such of the Christians as embraced Islam must not be baptized until they attained the age of puberty. To generalize this to mean that baptism as such was absolutely forbidden is wrong.

Condition of women in the time of 'Umar.

Woman in Arabia was the subject of rather harsh treatment, and 'Umar had a special reputation for this failing of his race. Long before the revelation of the Quranic verse enjoining the seclusion of women, he would urge that the females of the Prophet's household must observe *parda*. But it was not the *parda* that is in vogue

now. 'Umar's own example shows that women did all necessary work. Once, it is recorded, a certain friend was putting up as a guest at his house and his wife in person served the food. The supervision of the market was also in the hands of a lady. Nay, during his reign, women actually enlisted and went up to the theatre of war to tend the wounded, dress their wounds and do similar relief work. Some even participated in fighting. Women were also free to attend lectures, sermons and other similar functions. Once when 'Umar delivered a sermon against the practice of settling large sums as dower-money, it was a woman who stood up and objected, saying : "O son of Khaṭṭāb ! how dare you deprive us when God says in the Qur'ān that even a heap of gold may be settled on the wife as dower?" Rather than resent it, 'Umar appreciated this courage of conviction and complimented the objector, saying ; "The women of Medīna have more of understanding than 'Umar." When as a Caliph he made education compulsory in Arabia, it was made so both for boys and for girls. In short, consistently with the requirements of their household functions, women were seen side by side with men in almost every walk of life.

Gradual abolition  
of slavery.

It must be recorded as one of the greatest achievements of the Caliph that he took a very long step towards the abolition of slavery. With regard to Arabia, a definite order was issued that no Arab should be made a slave. This, in fact, was the first step towards total abolition. If the later generations of the Muslim kings had carried on this gradual reform, as originally intended in the Qur'ān itself, the institution would have been eradicated from among the Muslims twelve centuries since. As a rule, only prisoners of war were considered slaves,\* and the civil population was in no way interfered with. But the Caliph granted a great deal of freedom even to these prisoners of war. They were mostly set free, as for instance, the war prisoners of Egypt were all restored to their homeland. The war-prisoners of Manādhir were also set at large. In the various treaties, whenever mention was made of the security of life and property, it implied that the vanquished foe would not be converted into slaves. Notwithstanding these reforms, whatever number of slaves still

\* It must be borne in mind that the prisoners of war were distributed among the soldiers as there were no other arrangements for keeping them. But they were set free either as a matter of favour or on receipt of ransom. To this effect there is a plain injunction in the Holy Qur'ān: "When you have overcome them, then make them prisoners; and afterwards either set them free as favour or let them ransom themselves" (47: 4).

existed, they were treated by Muslim soldiers as fellow-brothers.

*Equality of man.*

Equality of man was another great virtue of Islam which stands out so conspicuous in the caliphate of 'Umar. Himself he was a living example of this principle, and through him this spirit was diffused among the rank and file of state officials and down into the general public. Elected a king, he yet gave no preference to himself over others. When subsistence allowances were fixed, he refused to accept more than was allowed to all those who had taken part in the battle of Badr. This was five thousand dirhams a year. When 'Abdullāh, the Caliph's son, grumbled that he had got a smaller allowance than Usāma, the son of Zaid, he was curtly told that Usāma's father was much dearer to the Prophet than his own. Bilāl, 'Ammār, and others who were originally slaves but were among the foremost who embraced Islam, were shown preference over great chiefs of the Quraish. In the appointment of governors, the Caliph never showed any partiality in favour of his own or of the Prophet's tribe. High officials if guilty of transgressing upon others' rights, were called to account and submitted to similar treatment at the hands of the aggrieved. Jabla, a Syrian chief, when performing *Tawāff*, i.e., circum-ambulation

around the Ka'ba, dealt a slap to a man whose foot had chanced to touch the chief's flowing robe. In return the man dealt him a similar slap. Complaint was brought to the Caliph who ruled that all Muslims were equal and difference in social status made no difference in rights as citizens. Offended at this, Jabla recanted the faith. 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ, governor of Egypt, had a pulpit set up in the mosque. The Caliph disallowed it, saying it was not Islamic for one man to sit above all the rest. The Caliph's own son, Abū Shahma, was found guilty of drinking, and was given the usual punishment of eighty stripes. All distinctions of heredity were abolished and society was ordered on the Quranic principle: "The most honourable among you is the one who is the most careful of his duty." What could show a greater sense of human equality than such pledges taken from high state officials, that they would not wear fine clothes, that they would not use sieved flour, that they would ever keep their doors open to the needy, that they would never keep any guard at their doors? Such being the governors and high state dignitaries, the equality pervading the general public may well be imagined.

Works of public  
good.

Works of public good and charity  
received special attention at the

hands of 'Umar. The weak and disabled were granted allowances from the public treasury, and in this there was no discrimination of Muslim or non-Muslim. The system of old-age pensions now prevailing in many countries in Europe, was first introduced by 'Umar. For way-farers, large caravansaries were erected in all the big centres. Children without any guardians were brought up at the expense of the state. During the famine days, the Caliph worked day and night to render succour to the starving and even gave up the luxury of meat. He never squandered public money on poets. When in the great plague of Syria, thousands of Muslims died, in person did he attend to the needs of the bereaved families, making every necessary arrangement as regards their property and children. To ascertain the weal and woe of his subjects, he would go out at night and visit various places. On one such round, he came upon a solitary tent. As he was seated there on the ground with the Beduin, from inside the tent were heard the cries of a woman. On inquiring, he was informed that the Beduin's wife was all alone and these cries were the travails of child-birth. Forthwith the Caliph hurried back to his house and took his wife, Ummi-Kulthūm, to the tent to nurse the lonely woman.



Spreading of  
Islam and the  
knowledge of Quran

During the reign of 'Umar there was no separate organization to push forward the propagation of Islam. Nevertheless, on unorganized lines, every opportunity was availed of for the spread of Islam. Generally speaking, the commanders of the army were selected from among the learned ones, so that they might, in addition to their military duties, disseminate the light of Islam wherever they went. Every Muslim soldier was also supposed to be a preacher of Islam which fact has given rise to the common misunderstanding that a Muslim carried his sword in one hand and the Qur'ān in the other. Of course, they did, but not in the sense implied. They were there to fight in the defence of their liberties. It was their zeal for their faith that they would not let even such an opportunity slip, and availed of it for the promulgation of truth. It was thus that the sword and the faith appeared side by side; not in the sense, that the Muslims were out to spread their faith by sword, and offered the choice between the sword and the faith, but in the sense that even the soldier who had to fight the battles of the nation was animated with a zeal for spreading the truth. Side by side with preaching, the practical example of Muslims was a great force to attract the hearts of others. The northern part of Arabia, and most of the Arab



tribes of Syria who had embraced Christianity under the influence of Christian rule, were soon attracted by the beauties of Islam. Likewise Mesopotamia also joined the faith. In Persia, the great Magian chiefs were the first to join, and through their example created an inclination for the acceptance of Islam among the masses as well. In Egypt too, Islam spread by leaps and bounds. The simplicity, sincerity and righteousness of each individual worked as a charm as no sermon could do, and as a result, batches after batches came pouring into the fold. In certain places, two to four thousand came in together. In the army of Islam there was quite a large proportion of these new converts. In the city of Fustāt, wards after wards were inhabited by these new-comers. Not only were the people converted but they were also instructed in the faith of their adoption. In the conquered territories, teachers were appointed for this purpose who were paid out of state treasury. This system of paid teachers is also one of the noteworthy deeds of 'Umar. Instruction in the Qur'ān was compulsory for all Beduin tribes, and an inspector was appointed to tour round and report those who neglected to avail of these arrangements. Such distinguished companions as Abū Ayyūb, Abū Dardā, and 'Ubāda were deputed to Syria for the purpose of

organizing Muslim education in that country. They spent some time in Hims, Damascus and Palestine and popularized Quranic instruction in those parts. Soldiers had instructions to learn the Qur'ān and consequently, while they fought the country's battles, in their leisure hours, they acquired knowledge of the Qur'ān. Every division of the army had several hundreds of those who had the Qur'ān by heart.

**Soldier and Administrator.** Umar was not merely a great soldier. He was an equally great administrator. Side by side with his conquests, he displayed unique genius in organizing the civil administration of the territories subjugated. Were he to neglect this part of his duties, his conquests would have been but a passing phase, and in a short time those territories would have been lost to Islam. But he did not do things by half measures. Islam went to these countries and was going to stay there by the beneficent administration and the general good treatment that it extended to those countries. With the advent of Islam, people grew in prosperity. Every country was divided into provinces; measurement of land was made; census was taken; offices were established; police force was organized; jails were built; cantonments were set up; canals were dug out; public treasuries

were started, and the Muslim era of Hijra which has been a great help in the preservation of history was introduced.

A true successor of the Prophet. 'Umar was a great conqueror. He was a great administrator. Yet, it must be remembered, he was in no sense a king. In the truest sense of the word he was the Caliph *i.e.*, a successor of the Prophet. To faithfully walk in his Master's footsteps, that was his sole anxiety. Just as in the Prophet, so in his Caliph, worldly power or wealth, produced not the slightest change. Just as the Prophet, even so his Caliph, lived the plain simple life of a humble man. At his table, there never were any dainty dishes. During the famine, he gave up even such small luxuries as meat and olive oil. His dress was spotted with good many patches. Wordly riches were of little consequence in his sight. He often feared that wealth might become the ruin of Muslims. For his residence, he had no palaces built nor was there any magnificent council-hall erected. The business of government was conducted in the same old mosque where the Prophet used to sit and teach and conduct other business. There in the mosque met the councils, there on the floor of the mosque were received the ambassadors and grandees of the Persian and Roman empires. Like the Prophet, he did all little offices to others,

and in person would he carry to the families, the letters received from the battle-field. Sense of accountability for the great national trust always caused him anxiety. The most glorious of conquests produced not the faintest air of pride in him. Master of four kingdoms, he walked on God's earth with the meekness of the humblest man. He did not touch a single thing belonging to the *Baitul Māl*, except the fixed amount sanctioned by the council for his subsistence. Once when as a cure for some ailment, he wanted honey, he refused to take it from the *Baitul Māl* until the council had sanctioned it. Once the Caliph enquired of Salmān, one of the great companions, whether he was a Caliph or King. "If you extort money from people," replied the wise man, "if you misappropriate money from the public treasury, then you are a king, otherwise a Caliph." Thus, most scrupulously fulfilling the trust of the Prophet's successorship, the great Caliph 'Umar showed, that though a king in name, his true office was that of the Caliph of the Prophet.

## ‘UTHMĀN

### Early Life.

‘Uthmān was the third Caliph of Islam after the Holy Prophet. Before joining the brotherhood of Islam, ‘Uthmān was known by his *Kunya*, Abū ‘Amr, after that as Abū ‘Abdullāh. Dhunnūrain\* was his epithet of his honour. His father’s name was ‘Affān and mother’s, Arwā. At the fifth place his ancestral pedigree joins that of the Holy Prophet. He belonged to the Banī Umayya clan of the Quraish. This was the clan which, after the period of the early Caliphate, acquired possession of the empire of Islam and wielded the sceptre of authority for about a century. Abū Sufyān who had repeatedly led the Quraish and other tribes in war against the Prophet, and at length embraced Islam at the fall of Mecca, was one of the prominent figures of this clan. Even before the advent of Islam, the Banū Umayya enjoyed a position of distinction, being entrusted with the custody of the national flag of the Quraish. ‘Uthmān was younger than

\**Dhunnūrain*. lit., means possessor of two lights. ‘Uthmān was so called for having married two daughters of the Holy Prophet, one after another. Of these two, Ruqayya bore him a son called ‘Abdullāh, after whom he adopted the *Kunya* Abū ‘Abdullāh. The child died at the age of six.

the Holy Prophet by six years. From his childhood he was upright and honest. He had also learnt reading and writing. When he grew up, he took to trade and did flourishing business. He enjoyed special esteem for his integrity and was on friendly terms with Abū Bakr.

When the Holy Prophet proclaimed his mission, 'Uthmān was thirty-four years of age. Abū Bakr was the first man to carry to him the message of Islam. One day 'Uthmān and Ṭalḥa-bin-'Ubaid-ullāh came to the Prophet who explained to them the teachings of Islam and recited a passage from the Qur'ān. He told them of the obligations that Islam imposed as also of the high place to which it wanted to uplift man. Both embraced Islam. This took place when the Prophet had not as yet repaired to the house of Arqam. On this occasion 'Uthmān related a personal experience. "I am just coming back from Syria," he said. "On the way at one place we were feeling somewhat drowsy when there came a voice, 'wake up, ye sleeping ones, Aḥmad has appeared in Mecca.' On our arrival back here we came to know about your mission."\*

The clan of Banū Umayya to which 'Uthmān belonged was the only clan among the Quraish

\*Ṭabqāt Ibn-i-Sa'd, Vol. III, p. 37.



which was opposed to the Banū Hāshim, the clan of which the Prophet came. For this reason the leading men of this clan such as 'Aqba-bin-Mu'aīṭ and Abū Sufyān were among the bitterest foes of the Prophet. 'Uthmān, however, was not in the least influenced by these considerations, and when Truth dawned on him, he did not hesitate to accept it. When his uncle Ḥakam came to know about his conversion, he had 'Uthmān tied down with a rope and said that until he had renounced the new faith, he would never be untied. To this 'Uthmān replied that he would never forsake Islam, come what might.

Emigration to  
Abyssinia.

'Uthmān was not very long in the fold of Islam when Abū Lahab made his son, 'Utba, divorce the Prophet's daughter, Ruqayya, to whom she was married. Thereupon the Holy Prophet gave her in marriage to 'Uthmān. When the persecutions of Muslims exceeded all bounds, and the Prophet counselled them to emigrate to Abyssinia, 'Uthmān along with his wife, Ruqayya, was one of the first batch of emigrants. After remaining there for a number of years, he returned to Mecca, from where he again emigrated to Medīna with the rest of the companions.

Services rendered  
to the cause of  
Islam.

After emigration to Medīna, 'Uthmān took a most prominent part in serving the cause of Islam.

In point of financial sacrifices he was second only to Abū Bakr. Medīna had only one well of drinking water, called Bi'r Rooma. When the Muslims settled there it was in the possession of non-Muslims who charged the Muslims a certain price for the water. The Prophet felt this trouble to which the Muslim brotherhood was put, and expressed a wish that some Muslim might purchase it and make it public property. 'Uthmān was the man who fulfilled this wish of the Prophet and purchased the well for twenty thousand Dirhams, according to some for thirty-five thousand. When the Prophet's Mosque appeared too small to accommodate the daily growing congregation of Islam, the Prophet expressed a wish if someone would purchase the adjoining piece of land and add it to the mosque. 'Uthmān fulfilled this wish too. He purchased the piece and carried out the extension of the mosque from his own pocket. Towards the battle of Tabūk, when the Muslims were passing through a period of extreme difficulties and a huge expedition was to be sent out against the Roman Empire, 'Uthmān contributed ten thousand Dīnārs in cash and a thousand camels. Thus he bore the expenses of a great part of the army.

Uthman's part  
in warfare. Persecuted by the Quraish, the  
Muslims emigrated to Medīna.



There too they did not let them alone and repeatedly attacked them. The first attack took place at Badr in the second year of the Hijra. As this battle-field was at a distance of three days' journey from Medīna and 'Uthmān's wife Ruqayya, the Prophet's daughter, was seriously ill, he could not take part in this battle. He stayed behind with the Prophet's express permission in order to attend to his sick wife. She, however, could not get over the illness and passed away before the news of the victory of Badr reached Medīna. 'Uthmān's absence from this battle was due to unavoidable circumstances, and so when the war-spoils were distributed, he was also given the due share of a soldier. After the death of Ruqayya, the Prophet gave his second daughter, Ummi Kulthūm in marriage to 'Uthmān. For this reason he came to be known as *Dhunnūrain*, i.e., one having two lights.

'Uthmān took part in the battle of Uhud which came about a year later. The enemy was repulsed. But the Muslim archers blundered. They left their position where the Prophet had posted them and which he had ordered them to stick to whatever the issue of the war, victory or defeat. The Meccans were quick to see their opportunity. They took possession of the same strong point

and fell upon the Muslims from the rear. The scales were thus turned and the victorious but scattered force of Islam was in straits. A portion of the army, cut off from the main body, fled back to Medina. Another, though it kept to the field, lost their foothold and drew aside. Among these latter was 'Uthmān as well, for which some people subsequently reproached him. As a matter of fact, it was no fault of 'Uthmān. The Holy Qur'ān itself considers this fault to be pardonable (3 : 154). No one is therefore entitled to reproach or criticise him on this account. 'Uthmān took part in all other battles. No doubt, he was not present at the treaty of the Hudaibiyya but that was due to the fact that the Prophet himself had deputed him as an emissary to the Quraish who retained him as a prisoner. The news had even got abroad that he had been killed. The Prophet had consequently taken from his men a fresh pledge of allegiance. The murder of an envoy was tantamount to a declaration of war. The pledge known as *Bai'at-i-Ridzwān* was due to this emergency. The Muslims vowed that however formidable the enemy's onslaught, they would stick to the field and fight till the last man. When all had taken the vow, the Prophet in person took a similar vow on behalf of 'Uthmān, placing one of his hands on the other. This

shows the esteem in which he held him. The Quraish were so impressed at the sight of this display of devotion that they concluded a truce, and set 'Uthmān at liberty. The army drawn up for the battle of Tabūk, known as the *Jaish-ul-'Usra*\* owed its formation, in a very large measure to the self-sacrifice of 'Uthmān.

Part played in  
earlier Caliphate.

'Uthmān occupied an important position in the affairs of State during the Caliphate of both, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. He was a prominent figure in the *Majlis-i-Shūrā*, and his advice was sought on all important matters. When the end of Abū Bakr drew near, and he was anxious to nominate a fit person to succeed him, he consulted, first of all, 'Abdur Raḥmān Bin 'Auf and 'Uthmān. After he had sounded their views, he consulted other people. The same position of trust and confidence was enjoyed by him during the reign of 'Umar.

Elected Caliph.

For the appointment of a suitable successor to himself, 'Umar made on his death-bed the best arrangement possible under the circumstances. The choice of the first

\* Lit., *the army of difficulty*. The Tabūk army was so-called, because in the first place, the journey had to be undertaken in the intense heat of the summer, and secondly, it was the time of reaping the harvest and ripening of fruit which made it very difficult to proceed.

two Caliphs had presented little difficulty. At the Prophet's death, there was amongst his companions, a man of Abū Bakr's overtowering personality, a man commanding universal respect both for his piety and his capacity, and all eyes spontaneously turned to him for a fitting successor. Likewise, when the earthly life of Abū Bakr was drawing to a close, and the question of a Caliph again came up before the Muslims, fortunately there yet existed among them a man of 'Umar's conspicuous calibre, and on him fell the unanimous choice. After 'Umar, however, there were amongst the companions many on whom the Prophet's mantle could most fittingly have fallen. But among them there was none standing out in distinct relief from the rest as did Abū Bakr and 'Umar in their respective times. They were all men more or less on the same plane and hence the question of a choice out of so many people, all fitted for the exalted office, was a matter for some anxiety. During his life-time, 'Umar used to say that Abū 'Ubaida-bin-Jarrāh, should he survive himself, would make the best Caliph. But Abū 'Ubaida was already dead. Then there was 'Abdur Raḥmān-bin 'Auf who was held in the greatest esteem, and whom 'Umar had made the imam in his own place when he received the fatal wound. But 'Abdur Raḥmān was not willing

to shoulder the great responsibility. Among others qualified for this great national trust, the most prominent were those nominated by the dying Caliph to make the choice from amongst themselves. There was 'Uthmān, an old venerable man of 70, who had at his back a proud record of great pecuniary sacrifices in the cause of Islam and who, besides, had the honour of having had in his wedlock two of the Prophet's daughters, one after the other. There was 'Alī, the Prophet's cousin as well as son-in-law, whose strength of arm was the dread of the foe and whose erudition and piety the blessing of the friend. Sa'd-bin-Abī-Waqqās, the conqueror of Persia, was another prominent man. Though recalled from the Governorship of Kūfa, it was only for a trifling affair. He possessed special administrative capacity. Ṭalḥa and Zubair who enjoyed great esteem for their glorious deeds in the service of Islam and the defence of the Prophet, and had the additional distinction of being two of the Blessed Ten (*'Ashra Mubashshara*). 'Umar had charged these six persons with the election of one from their midst as the Caliph. A better arrangement and a better set of men could not have been conceived of. If left to the masses, the question was sure to give rise to dissensions and disturbance. They

had further been instructed to make the choice within three days. After the Caliph's death, five of the nominees, Ṭalḥa not being present at the time, conferred together and it was unanimously resolved that the choice should be left in the hands of 'Abdur Raḥmān-bin-'Auf. 'Abdur Raḥmān consulted each one individually as to his opinion. Sa'd favoured 'Uthmān. Zubair mentioned both 'Uthmān and 'Alī. 'Uthmān voted for 'Alī and 'Alī for 'Uthmān. Thus barring 'Abdur Raḥmān himself, the majority of votes were in favour of 'Uthmān. But 'Abdur Raḥmān went still further and sounded the prominent figures of the nation who had, in connection with the pilgrimage, assembled from all parts of the country. Then also the trend of general opinion was in favour of 'Uthmān. On the fourth day, therefore, early in the morning, 'Abdur Raḥmān declared 'Uthmān as the duly elected Caliph, and everybody, forthwith, took the oath of allegiance. This was the first day of the year according to the Islamic calendar, Muharram 1, 24 A. H. After the oath-taking, appeared Ṭalḥa as well. 'Uthmān related the whole matter to him and told him that he was prepared to withdraw even at that stage, if he (Ṭalḥa) was against his election. But Ṭalḥa expressed his agreement, and took the oath of fealty.



Revolt in Persia  
leads to extension of  
Empire.

Perfect peace and tranquillity reigned in Persia till the end of the second Caliph's life, but some six months had hardly passed, when to the violation of solemn treaties, the whole country rose in open insurrection against the authority of Islam. The ex-king Yazdejird, though in exile, was yet alive, and was at the bottom of this mischief. His agents let loose over the length and breadth of the land succeeded in rousing sentiments of loyalty to the old ruling dynasty, and the eyes of the populace once more turned to their exiled ruler. 'Uthmān met the situation with a firm hand. Troops were promptly hurried to the scene, the insurrection was quelled and treaty relations were established anew. This time, however, the Muslim army had to extend its operations to the Persian frontiers where, in fact, the whole trouble had originated. Thus this second conquest of Persia led to the further extension of the Empire of Islam. On one side, the flag of Islam fluttered over Balkh and Turkistan whereas on the other was won the homage of the chiefs of Hirāt, Kābul and Ghaznī. Most of Khurāsān such as Nīshāpur, Tūs and Merv, fell into the Muslims' hands in the year 30 A. H. The following year which was the eighth year of the rule of 'Uthmān,

Yadejird passed away in his exile. In 32 A. H. the Muslim army had an encounter with the Turkish forces in the valley of Āzarbāijān. At first, the Muslims suffered a reverse but on the arrival of reinforcements, the reputation of Muslim arms was amply retrieved. Thus during the reign of 'Uthmān, not only was peace established in the countries conquered during that of 'Umar, but towards the east and the north, the frontiers of the Muslim Empire were considerably pushed forward.

There was trouble in Syria as well. 'Umar had appointed Mu'āwiya to the governorship of Damascus, but gradually the whole of the country came under the sway of that governor. The Cæsar of Rome looked quietly on and for a time there was no move on his part. In the second year of 'Uthmān's reign, however, Roman armies poured into Syria by the land route of Asia Minor. The Syrian garrison at the disposal of Mu'āwiya was not sufficiently strong to withstand the invaders. Fresh troops were consequently sent by the Caliph and the Cæsar's forces were defeated. Here as in Persia, the Muslims did not stop with repelling the enemy and carried their arms beyond the Syrian frontiers, right into Asia Minor, and having scoured through Armenia,

Roman attack  
on Syria and further  
conquests.



they affected a conjunction with the Persian army in Ṭabristān. From there, they pushed straight north, going as far as Tiflis and the Black Sea. And henceforward, almost every year, the Roman hordes from Constantinople would swoop down on the Muslims and consequently, the Syrian army kept busy with fortifying the frontiers.

The island of Cyprus was occupied in the year 28 A. H., 649 A. D. *Cyprus occupied.* Even during the reign of 'Umar, Mu'āwiya had moved the Caliph for permission to capture this small island, which, the Governor urged, was in so close a proximity to the Syrian frontier that even the dog's bark there could be heard on the Syrian coast. 'Umar, however, was averse to naval warfare. Now when the Romans made repeated incursions on the Syrian frontier, Mu'āwiya once more urged the occupation of this important strategic point. Permission being granted, the island was immediately seized. The inhabitants agreed to pay the same tribute to the Muslims as they did to the Romans. Some years later, however, the Cypriots assisted the Roman armies against the Muslims, and Mu'āwiya had therefore again to invade the island which henceforth became a part of the Muslim Empire. This took

place in 33 A. H.

Roman invasion  
of Egypt and further  
conquests in Africa.

The death of 'Umar was, so to speak, a signal for the foes on all sides to overthrow the Empire of Islam. There was insurrection in Persia. The Romans attempted to regain possession of Syria. Egypt following suit, shared the common fate of sister-dependencies. In the year 25 A. H., 646 A. D., the Romans landed at the port of Alexandria and took possession of the town. Soon after, however, 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ, the Governor, drove the Romans out and recovered that port. Tranquillity was thus restored in Egypt, but towards the west, the Romans still kept up hostilities. And in the meantime the governorship of the country changed hands. There arose a dispute between 'Amr, the Governor, and 'Abdullāh-bin-Sa'd on certain administrative matters. This 'Abdullāh was the foster-brother of 'Uthmān, and a capable administrator. The Caliph had put him in charge of upper Egypt. The dispute was brought before the Caliph who decided against the Governor, and ultimately recalled him to the capital. His place was occupied by 'Abdullāh-bin-Sa'd. During the reign of 'Umar, the territory extending as far as Tripoli and Barqa had come under Muslim sway. The Roman garrisons, nevertheless, held

to their positions and as yet no decisive battle had been fought on that front. The Caliph sent instructions to the new governor to proceed thither and clear the Romans out. For, so long as Roman forces were there on the soil of north Africa, the position of Islam in Egypt could in no way be secure. Gregory, the Roman commander, had a force 120,000 strong, an army too big for the meagre force of 'Abdullāh. Additional troops were consequently sent to Egypt to enable the governor to carry out the Caliph's instructions. Among other distinguished soldiers, there were among this army, 'Abdullāh-bin-'Abbās and 'Abdullāh-bin-'Umar. The Romans offered a stubborn resistance. Hostilities dragged on. Fortune seemed to fluctuate sometimes one way, sometimes the other. At last, Gregory was slain at the hands of 'Abdullāh-bin-Zubair and at the fall of their commander, the Roman forces were disheartened and took to flight. This came about in the year 26 A. H. Five years later, in 31 A.H., the Roman Empire made another attempt. A fleet of 500 vessels was prepared to invade Egypt. On the other side, 'Abdullāh also had a fleet prepared though on a much smaller scale. The two fleets met, vessel boarded against vessel and a hand to hand fight ensued in which the Romans were defeated. Notwithstanding

these signal victories, however, the Governor, 'Abdullāh-bin-Sa'd, grew unpopular among the Muslims.

Causes of the  
discontent in  
'Uthman's Caliph-  
ate.

As all these events in various parts of the Empire of Islam bear out, the machinery of Government had in no way slackened, as is sometime supposed, during the reign of 'Uthmān. It worked with its usual smoothness and speed. Wherever, an insurrection cropped up, it was forthwith put down. Frontiers were expanded and fortified and many a new land annexed to the Empire. A successful beginning was made even in naval warfare, of which Muslims had no experience. Thus the Muslim society had in no way lost anything of its vigour and vitality. But a subterranean current of mischief was all the while gathering force, under this appearance of all-round prosperity, which ultimately burst forth, shaking the whole fabric to its foundations. In the newly conquered lands, large numbers had joined Islam —Magians, Jews and Christians. This general tide of converts had also brought with it into the fold some men who were by no means fascinated by the beauties of the faith. Their sole game was that under the cloak of Islam, they would be in a better position to undermine Islam. And that greatest virtue of Islam *viz.*, its unique spirit of

democracy, served as a ready weapon in the hands of this unscrupulous gang. The faith of the Prophet stood for perfect equality of man, irrespective of any earthly distinctions. There was no restriction whatever on freedom of opinion as well as the expression of that opinion. The Governors were made accessible to the public to the extent that they were forbidden to have any guard at their doors, so that there might not be the least hitch for the aggrieved to approach the highest authority of the place at any time. Not only were the Governors so readily accessible to all ; they were actually at the mercy of the public. If there were complaints against a Governor, real or imaginary, the Caliph's door at the Capital was ever open to receive them. On smallest trouble at the hands of a Governor, people would approach the Caliph and have another of their own choice appointed in his place. The position of the Caliph himself, in this wonderful democracy, was no higher than that of a commoner. He was considered the servant of the people, not the King, and as such he was open to criticism. In this twentieth century of civilization even for a word against the king, one stands in danger of losing his head. But not so in Islam. Though Emperor of four great kingdoms, the Caliph was no more than just an individual

member of society. It was open to anybody and every body to pick any amount of holes in him. This unrestricted freedom, in itself the highest virtue, served, in the hands of mischief-mongers, as the most deadly weapon to undermine the power of Islam. Every Muslim was supposed to be a partner in the Government and so were these conspirators. With the badge of Islam, they passed for Muslims and enjoyed Muslim rights—which rights they seized the more easily to wreck the society of which they pretended to be members and which, openly, they could not injure. In the Capital itself, there was little danger of the abuse of this privilege of free expression of opinion. Most of the inhabitants were those who had sat at the Prophet's feet and imbibed from him direct the true fraternal spirit of the faith or the off-spring of these people, and they walked in the footsteps of their elders. But such new colonies as Baḡra, Kūfa, Fustāṭ were inhabited by a medley of all kinds of people, and it was in these centres, therefore, that the germs of mischief found a congenial soil. Here brewed that storm which sullied the latter days of the rule of 'Uthmān and ultimately led to his murder.

Appointment and  
dismissal of Gov-  
ernors.

The main accusation brought against 'Uthmān appertains to his distribution of the loaves and fishes



of Government offices. During the first six years of his reign, it is admitted, he gave no cause for complaint. Rather among a particular section of the people, the Quraish, he was considered decidedly a better man than his illustrious predecessor. But the trouble began in the latter half of his rule when in the appointment of Governors, he was, it is alleged, influenced in favour of his own relations, against whom, furthermore, when thus appointed, he would not even listen to the grievances of the populace. These were the charges brought against the Caliph by those who rose against him and killed him. Now to weigh these charges, let us turn to the cold facts of history. The charge-sheet consisted of three counts, the distribution of the governorships of Baṣra, Kūfa and Egypt. The Governor of Syria, Mu'āwiya, too, was a near relation of 'Uthmān but this appointment had been made by 'Umar and was simply continued under 'Uthmān.\* To take the dispute about Kūfa, it will be recollected, that Sa'd, the conqueror of Persia, was, during the reign of 'Umar, appointed the Governor of that province, and subsequently on a minor complaint recalled by that Caliph. He was replaced by Mughīra. At his death-bed, however, the Caliph 'Umar expressed a desire that Sa'd must be reinstated in his office. Accordingly when 'Uthmān

took the reins of Government in hand, he recalled Mughīra and reappointed Sa'd to the Governorship. Now there arose a dispute between Sa'd, the Governor, and Ibn-i-Mas'ūd, the treasury officer of Kūfa. Sa'd had taken a loan from the treasury and after some time, when the latter reminded the Governor to pay up the debt, there ensued an altercation between the two, and this altercation developed into an open dispute. Such strained relations between two highest dignitaries of the state could not but have a repercussion on the general public. The Kufites ranged themselves, some on one side, some on the other. Such a state of things could not be allowed to continue for long without serious danger to public tranquillity. Sa'd was consequently once more recalled from the Governorship, and Walīd bin-'Aqba appointed in his place. Walīd was no doubt a near kinsman of the Caliph on the mother's side, but the mere fact that the event took place in the year 25 A. H. should suffice to exonerate the Caliph of any suspicion of partiality for relatives. It was yet the beginning of his reign and all critics are agreed that at least for the first six years, his hands were perfectly clean. This charge must thus be summarily dismissed on the accusers' own admission. That the Caliph was in no way moved by considerations of relationship is further



evident from the fact that when Walīd was accused of drinking liquor, he was not only dismissed but actually given the prescribed number of stripes as required by law. What could be a greater proof of his absolute freedom from the weakness imputed to the Caliph—*viz.*, partiality for relations? It is certainly no slight thing to have a provincial Governor striped in public, and if 'Uthmān were really actuated by any motives of relationship, he could have very well managed to shield him at least against this ignominy. Walīd was succeeded in the year 30 A. H., by Sa'id-bin-'Aṣ, an inexperienced youth who also happened to be a relation of the Caliph. Under him the rowdy elements of the population of Kūfa scored a considerable ascendancy and consequently in the year 34 A. H., he was replaced by Abū Mūsā Ash'arī, who had no blood-relationship with the Caliph. This disarmed the mischief-mongers of the only weapon with which they spread discontent against the rule of 'Uthmān.

To turn to the affairs at Baṣra, Abū Mūsā Ash'arī had been appointed Governor of the place by the Caliph 'Umar. In the year 29, when the people of Baṣra accused him of partiality for the Quraish, 'Uthmān removed him and appointed in his place a man of their own choice. This man, however, could not acquit

himself in that position of responsibility and therefore he was replaced by 'Abdullāh-bin-Āmir. Though a relation of 'Uthmān, the achievements of 'Abdullāh in the re-conquest of Persia and annexation of extensive new territory to the Empire, furnish a concrete proof that in his selection, the Caliph was influenced solely by considerations of the sterling worth of the man. Subsequently events put a seal of confirmation on this choice, as they did in the case of 'Abdullāh-bin-Sa'd who was appointed Governor of Egypt instead of 'Amr-bin-Āṣ. As already stated he was a foster-brother of 'Uthmān, but his African triumphs against the vast Roman hordes as well as his breaking absolutely new ground in creating a strong navy for the Muslim Empire, show that he was a man of genius and daring, and certainly it was as such, not as a relation, that 'Uthmān chose him to be at the helm of Egyptian affairs in those critical times. Nevertheless when the insurgents reached Medīna and demanded his removal, the Caliph readily consented, recalling 'Abdullāh and appointing their own nominee, Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr in his place.

'Uthman's impartiality in the choice of Governors.

From what has been said above, it is evident that among others, 'Uthmān also made the choice of those who happened to be somehow related to

him. But to jump from such data to a general conclusion and accuse him of partiality is certainly unwarranted. In the first place, relationship is a very comprehensive term, including within its meaning the most distant relations. And the relations chosen by 'Uthmān for these appointments, could by no stretch of significance be called *near* relations. Then comes the still more weighty consideration that if he appointed his relations, he removed them just the same whenever there were complaints against them. Partiality should have dictated that he should have turned a deaf ear to the clamour against his relations. But not only did he remove them on public complaints, he had one of them actually striped on a charge of drinking. Then again the consideration that these relations of the Caliph distinguished themselves in the Persian and African conquests should go to justify these selections on their own merits and absolve 'Uthmān of any pro-relation proclivities. The assertion that such appointments of relations were only made in the last six years of the Caliph's rule and not in the first six, is not borne out by facts. Walīd was made Governor of Kūfa in 25 A. H., the second year of his reign. 'Abdullāh-bin-Sa'd was made Governor of Egypt in 26 A. H., the

third year of his reign. And at that period of his rule, when these appointments were actually made, there was, as all critics agree, no complaint against the Caliph on this score. This shows that there was nothing genuine in the charge, that it was a mere pretext, seized on at a much later date and dangled in the public eye with a view to spread dissatisfaction against the rule of the Caliph. The charge was thus absolutely baseless and the character of 'Uthmān perfectly free of the blemish imputed to him by malice just as a piece of clever propaganda. Nevertheless, it may be frankly conceded that it would have been more desirable, should 'Uthmān have followed the policy of his predecessor, and instead of his relations, made the choice of other capable men to fill the offices of governors—more desirable, we say, because, at least, it would have deprived the mischief-mongers of one weapon to throw dust in the eyes of the public and spread disaffection against the Caliph. But perhaps it is not for us in the twentieth century to sit in judgment on and dictate to those pioneers of Islam, not knowing their difficulties nor their dangers, nor the conditions under which they had to steer the bark of Islam. However sound this counsel of precaution may look, at this distance of time,

we find that immediately after 'Uthmān, his successor, 'Alī, followed exactly the same policy and gave away most of the high offices of the state to his own kinsmen, the Banī Hāshim. Perhaps the situation then obtaining called for such a course. Perhaps the men they chose were the best available. At any rate, of one thing, on the score of facts already enumerated, we are certain. There was no base motive underlying, no partiality for relations.

Ibn-i-Saba leads  
agitation against  
'Uthman.

The root cause of the trouble that led to the assassination of 'Uthmān and the general undermining of the fabric of Islam, was one Ibn-i-Sabā, a Yemenite Jew, born of a negro mother and for that reason known as *Ibn-i-Saudā*, i.e., son of the black woman. In the eighth year of the reign of 'Uthmān, this man came over to Baṣra where 'Abdullāh-bin-'Āmir, was the Governor and embraced Islam. As his subsequent conduct would show, this was just a mask that he put on to conceal the dark designs he had in mind. At the outset, he confined his propaganda to creating disaffection against the Governors appointed by the Caliph. When the Governor of Baṣra came to know of it, he had him deported from there. Leaving Baṣra

he visited the various centres of the Empire, Kūfa, Syria and Egypt, and, though turned out from every place, he succeeded in injecting some of his venom everywhere. In Baṣra and Kūfa, there sprang up a sprinkling of people who fell into his trap and kept up his nefarious propaganda. Syria alone was protected from his ominous influence by the prudence of Mu'āwiyā. Arriving in Egypt, he displayed himself in his true colours, openly denouncing the Caliph as a usurper. 'Alī, he began to preach, was the rightful king, being the rightful heir of the Prophet. This seditious teaching he broadcasted from his Egyptian headquarters to other places, especially Baṣra and Kūfa, by means of his agents. And by giving this religious colouring to the campaign, he succeeded in finding many a dupe.

Agitation gains strength. This was the main plank of the agitation launched by Ibn-i-Sabā and his gang of agents against 'Uthmān. They denounced his caliphate as a usurpation of what legitimately belonged to 'Alī. The ingenuity of the author, however, was in no way at a loss to fish out many others. Any small thing that could in any way be made to add to the flames of disaffection was eagerly seized upon, painted in the most fantastic colours and



dangled before the simple, unsuspecting, credulous folk. As already stated, the ranks of Islam were swollen, during the reign of 'Umar, by a whole flood of converts from among the border tribes, especially in Mesopotamia where sprang up the two most flourishing settlements of Baṣra and Kūfa. So far as knowledge of Islam was concerned or the realization of its spirit, these multitudes had little in common with the veterans of the Prophet's days. Nevertheless, in the matter of privileges of citizenship, there was no distinction between the new and the old. The mere badge of the faith was enough to entitle them to the rights of a Muslim. Now equality and freedom of opinion were the two most important rights that Islam conferred on every individual. In the case of the older generation of Muslims, the exercise of these rights was tempered by a sense of duty and honesty they had imbibed from the teachings of Islam, and so in the use of these, they never overstepped the line of propriety. But not so in the case of these new-comers who had the rights without the sense of duty and honesty, and so some of them abused this newly-found liberty and equality. All sorts of imaginary charges were concocted against the Governors and the Caliph, and promulgated without let or hindrance.

The masses with whom listening is believing, and who had neither the capacity nor the resources to ascertain the truth of the allegations, fell ready victims to the vicious propaganda.

Disaffection spreads  
among Beduins.

The main plank of this propaganda, as already observed, was given a tinge of religion. To this nucleus were added as many others as the agitators could lay their hands on. To create disaffection among the Beduin tribes, it was dinned into their ears that all the high offices of the State were monopolized by the Quraish. When it was a time of sacrifice, of undergoing the privations of the battle-field and of spilling blood, so preached the agitators, the Beduins were seen in the forefront. To the strength of arm of these brave tribes were due all the glorious conquests on many a field. When, however, it came to the distribution of Government offices, the Beduin was conspicuous by his absence and the Quraishite was all in all. There was apparently much force in the argument. It was a fact that the Quraish had almost the monopoly of the high offices of the State but this was equally a fact that the Quraish alone had the requisite qualifications to properly fill those offices. The Quraish were admittedly the brain of the nation and however precious the strong arm of the Beduin might



be on the field of battle, it was a strong head that was needed in an administrator which the brave dweller of the desert did not possess. Nevertheless, the Beduin was shown only one side of the picture that he was exploited by the Quraish, and unaccustomed to any subtle thinking, it was but natural that he should have felt this as a personal wrong. The propaganda succeeded. A wave of discontent was set in motion among the Beduins.

Deportation of Abu  
Dharr.

Among the companions of the Prophet there was one, Abū Dharr, a man of a retiring temperament, who led the life somewhat of a hermit. He was one of the early converts to Islam, and it was a hobby with him to vehemently denounce riches as anti-Islamic. In Damascus where the Muslims possessed abundance of wealth, he was seized with one of these fits and began to preach against it. Worldly wealth, he argued, was meant only to be spent on charitable objects and was in no way to be hoarded. Gradually his views on the point reached the extreme limit and he would denounce all accumulators of wealth as fodder for hell. He based his verdict on the Quranic verse: "Those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in God's way, announce to them a painful chastisement" (9: 34).

Such unhinged effusions created a stir in society and there was fear of breach of peace. Consequently, the Governor, Mu'awiya, sent Abū Dharr to Medina. The Caliph in vain argued with him that his conclusions from the verse in question were wrong, and that beyond the prescribed tax of *Zakāt*, people could not be forced to part with their wealth. He went on blowing his own trumpet and there being apprehension of breach of peace in the capital as well, the Caliph sent him off to a place called Rabdha where he died two years later. This afforded another handle to the agitators to push forward their propaganda. The removal of Abū Dharr merely in the interest of public peace was depicted as an oppressive deportation of a saintly man on the part of the Caliph.

Burning of unauthentic copies of Holy Quran.

Islam had already spread far and wide. People of diverse nationalities and languages had joined the fold. In Arabia itself, there was a variety of dialects with differences in pronunciation. This had resulted in a corresponding variety of Quranic recitations. In one part, a particular word was pronounced one way; in another, in a different way. The Prophet had himself permitted these slight variations of pronunciation according to local dialects owing to lack of education among

the people. But such freedom in recitation was not necessary in the case of foreigners. Being utter strangers to the language, to them, all pronunciations were equal. If they could pick up one, they could pick up another with the same ease. In the interest of uniformity, it was desirable to have the same pronunciation. In Arabia itself, the Prophet's permission was only a temporary measure and was confined only to pronunciation. The script was to be the same all over. It seems, however, that people extended the permission originally granted by the Prophet, from pronunciation to script as well, and the varieties of pronunciation found their way into writing. Thus there sprang up copies of the Qur'ān with differences in script, and in the academies that were established during the rule of 'Umar, a variety of recitations were followed. Then there arose a third necessity. In the outlying parts of the empire, there were no standard copies of the Holy Book to which all copies made in those parts could have been compared. Under these circumstances it was desirable that there should be some arrangement to standardize the text of the Qur'ān all over the world of Islam. Of such a standard text there was but one volume, the one made out under the orders of Abū Bakr, as previously discussed. This volume was now in the hands of Ḥaṣṣa. The Caliph called a

council of the most prominent of companions, and it was decided with one voice that other copies of the one in Ḥafṣa's possession should be made out and placed in the various centres of the empire to serve as standard versions. To carry this out, a committee was appointed under the supervision of which some fresh copies were made and one placed in each one of the big centres of the Muslim world. At the same time, to avoid discrepancies, all the unauthentic copies, the product of individual efforts, were burnt. All this, as already said, was done under the supervision and according to the instructions of a committee duly appointed for the purpose. And as a matter of fact, in thus preparing a standard version, the Prophet's own idea had been carried into effect. The Prophet himself, though he allowed variety in recitation as suited the convenience of various dialects, maintained strict uniformity so far as the script was concerned. It was indeed a great service to Islam to take measures to preserve the script employed under the Prophet's own eyes. Several copies were consequently made from the standard volume prepared in Abū Bakr's time, but even this would, at best, have been a half measure, had not the unauthentic versions been absolutely wiped off, for in the presence of these, confusion

must again have arisen. This second measure, the burning of the unauthentic copies, was thus equally a service to Islam. Yet even such a commendable work could not fail to afford the tongue of malice material for pushing forward its own propaganda. The mischief-mongers raised their hands in horror that an act of great sacrilege had been committed. A hue and cry was raised that the Caliph had caused the sacred volumes to be burnt and the people far removed from the capital, when presented with such half-truths, naturally felt excited. Whatever it was, religious or sacrilegious, it was not the work of 'Uthmān alone. It was the work of the whole body of responsible Muslims met in council. But such small scruples did not trouble the agitator much, so long as he had something with which to rouse the ignorant masses against the Caliph.

**Mischief started.**

Egypt was the head-quarter of this movement aiming at the overthrow of 'Uthmān and thereby causing disruption within the house of Islam. From there, Ibn-i-Sabā carried on his propaganda and gained converts in several other parts, notably in Baṣra and Kūfa. As regards Medīna, the capital, Ibn-i-Sabā found it barren soil for his propaganda. He could entice only two men there, Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr and Muḥammad-bin-Abū Hudhaifa. They were both

young men who had a personal grudge against 'Uthmān's administration. While in Egypt they had both quarrelled with the Governor, 'Abdullāh-bin-Sa'd, the Caliph's foster-brother. When Ibn-i-Sabā reached Egypt and started agitation, he found easy victims in these two aggrieved youths. It was thus that they caught the contagion. Things in Kāfa moved fast. The ring-leaders now began to openly condemn the Caliph and his officials. On one occasion when the Governor was holding one of his usual social gatherings, a young man, in the course of the talk that was going on, expressed a wish that the Governor might come in possession of some lands, hinting thereby that he would then be in a position to patronize his friends. The accomplices of Ibn-i-Sabā who were also present seized this opportunity to kick up a row. "Do you wish to see others take possession of our lands", they exclaimed and fell upon the youth and had well-nigh killed him and his father. Such a scene in the Governor's presence amounted to openly flouting his authority. The matter was reported to the Caliph who ordered these men to be deported to Syria, where, he expected, Mu'āwiya might, with his usual tact cure them of their seditious tendencies. Ten men were thus exiled, including one Ushtar by name. Mu'āwiya tried his best to



bring them round but to no purpose. Consequently, he packed them off to another place, a safer distance where they were kept under surveillance. In the meantime, Sa'īd, the Governor of Kūfa, had come to Medīna to confer with the Caliph. The seditionists welcomed the opportunity as God-send, sent back for their exiled comrades and stirred up a general opposition. When Sa'īd returned, accompanied by one servant, they barred his entry into the town, and killed his attendant. The Governor, consequently, retraced his steps to Medīna. Now this was open insurrection and called for rigorous measures. 'Uthmān, however, was too meek, and rather than give exemplary punishment to the ring-leaders, he conciliated them by appointing another Governor, 'Abū Mūsā Ash'arī. Arriving at Kūfa, Abū Mūsā made the people renew their oaths of allegiance to the Caliph, but the embers of mischief kept smouldering under this seeming tranquillity.

Enquiry into  
grievances.

The influence of the seditionists was gradually on the increase. The most effective weapon in their hands was to bring the Caliph's Governors into disrepute. This was a matter in which the ignorant masses could easily be duped. Even Medīna was affected by the poison and tongues began to wag freely.

Day in and day out, heaps of complaints would pour into the capital from Baṣra, Kūfa and Egypt—of course, all fabricated in pursuance of a widespread conspiracy. This constant influx gave the propaganda some semblance of reality, and even some of the companions, having no means to ascertain the truth for themselves, began to entertain suspicion that there must be something really wrong with the Governors. They approached the Caliph to remedy the evil, who said that according to his reports the Governors were working quite alright. A council was consequently held and it was decided that reliable men should be sent to Baṣra, Kūfa, Damascus and Egypt, who should, after due enquiry there, report on the matter. ‘Abdullāh-bin-‘Umar, Usāma bin-Zaid, Muḥammad-bin-Muslim and ‘Ammār-bin-Yāsir were selected for this mission. Of these ‘Ammār who was deputed to Egypt was so taken in by the mealy-mouthed propagandists of Ibn-i-Sabā that he himself was caught in their net and never returned to submit his report. The reason seems to be that the Governor of Egypt was not popular with the people, and moreover the Sabaites were too clever for ‘Ammār who believed everything they told him as gospel truth. The other three deputies, however, were men of position and of independence of character. After thorough enquiry



on the spot they reported that the charges were all baseless.

Governors' Conference.

As a further precaution the Caliph sent word to all parts, informing the people that at the following Pilgrimage season, all the Governors would be present, and whoever had any grievance might put it before the Caliph on that occasion. This was the utmost that 'Uthmān could do to remove public grievances, if there were any. Trusted men had made searching enquiries and now by a proclamation, a general invitation was issued to anybody and everybody to put up his complaints on the Pilgrimage occasion. The Pilgrimage came and so came all the Governors. But there was no one with a grievance to put up. The reality of the matter was that, as reported by the enquiry commissioners, there was no oppression by the Governors anywhere. At last the Caliph called a Council of all the Governors and other prominent men to devise ways and means to put an end to this mischief. The unanimous counsel offered him was to deal firmly with the ring-leaders and to make examples of them. This, however, was the last thing that a man of 'Uthmān's gentle nature would agree to. He would on no account see a Muslim's blood shed or a disturbance caused among Muslims. Therefore nothing came out of

the conference to check the tide of sedition. On departure Mu'awiya apprized the Caliph that he sniffed serious mischief brewing and begged that either he might be permitted to send a detachment to serve as the Caliph's body-guard or that the Caliph might accompany him to Damascus. Both the offers were rejected. How could he quit the place, replied the Caliph, where the Prophet's earthly remains lay enshrined? Nor would he, for personal safety, impose upon the public treasury, the up-keep of a body-guard.

Seditionists  
gather at Medina  
Shawwal 35 A.H.  
March 656.

The Caliph had summoned the aggrieved to meet him on the Pilgrimage occasion, when Governors would also be there. Taking advantage of this, the seditionists had made a plot of their own. It had been arranged that when at the appointed time, the Governors should leave their respective provinces for the capital, large bodies of people should in their absence start from Baṣra, Kūfa and Egypt, and simultaneously reach Medīna, thus bringing pressure to bear upon the Caliph either to dismiss his Governors, or to abdicate. Should he refuse both, resort must be had to the sword. Consequently as the Governors under the Caliph's instructions, left for Medīna at the Pilgrimage season, the seditionists, taking advantage of their absence, set about

carrying out their own pre-arranged scheme. But their preparations were yet going on when to their dismay the Governors returned to their respective headquarters after having conferred with the Caliph, as described above. Thus was their first attempt baulked. The following year, however, they made the necessary arrangements beforehand. Under the pretence of the pilgrimage, they formed caravans of their own and left their respective centres, Baṣra, Kūfa and Egypt. Arriving at Medīna, they encamped there in separate places. When informed of the arrival of these bands and their designs, the Caliph, in the course of an address from the pulpit, raised a note of warning to these people. "They want to put an end to me," he observed, "but they must remember that if they raise their hands against me, it will lead to a conflagration among the Muslims and they will themselves have to repent for it." The people of the capital consequently took up their arms to defend the Caliph. This came as a sore disappointment to the conspirators who were under the impression that the Medinites were also discontented with the rule of 'Uthmān and expected no opposition from them. The ring-leaders, seeing that they could not force their way into the town with the whole population up in arms against them, thought

of another stratagem. The idea was somehow to get into the town and when once in, the Medinites would not be in a position to oppose them. They would thus have the town and the Caliph at their mercy. To effect this, therefore, they waited in a deputation on the Prophet's widows and told them that they wanted nothing more than the presentation of certain grievances to the Caliph and asking him to recall the Governors. The trick, however, was seen through and they were told that their explanation was not acceptable. And clearly enough, anybody could smell that the mischief was far too serious. If it were a case just of a few grievances, how was it that bands from three different places in different directions had arrived simultaneously? Obviously, it was according to a pre-arranged programme, a set plot. Disappointed in that quarter, the conspirators turned to another. They approached 'Alī where they had every reason to find a good reception. In his propaganda, Ibn-i-Sabā had been advocating the cause of 'Alī as the rightful heir of the Prophet, and they expected, judging human nature from their point of view, that the Prophet's cousin would accord them a hearty welcome. They had sadly misjudged, however. 'Alī was too noble a soul to entertain any such sordid schemes. To their disappointment, they found

that 'Alī would be the first to unsheathe his sword in the Caliph's defence. There were yet two quarters left to try. Like 'Alī, the conspirators had in their propaganda set up two other candidates to the Caliphate. The Basrites were for Ṭalḥa and the Kufites for Zubair. Consequently, now in time of need, they turned to their respective candidates for help. There too they met with a scornful rebuff. These exalted companions of the Prophet were far too angelic for any such meanness. Thus disappointed in every quarter, the conspirators resorted to a more ingenious hoax. Expressing regret at their conduct, they simply requested the recall of the Governor of Egypt and the substitution of Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr instead. The Caliph, in his extreme gentleness of nature, rather than call them to account for their seditious activities, acceded to their request and placed the appointment order of their nominee in their hands. Taking this document with them, all the three bands left the capital, pretending to be thoroughly satisfied. This was only the first act of the farce.

Seditionists' entry  
into Medina.

The people of Medina breathed a sigh of relief. The conspirators were gone and the crisis, as it seemed to them, was over. Normal activities were resumed. But they were soon undeceived. Only a few days

had passed when to their bewilderment, all the three bands reappeared at one and the same time and took the town by surprise. 'Alī with a few others went to see them to find out the reason. They produced a letter under the seal of the Caliph addressed to the Governor of Egypt, containing the instructions that as soon as those people should reach Egypt, they should be put to death or otherwise punished and also that he should consider his dismissal order as null and void. This letter, they said, they had intercepted, when on its way to Egypt by the hand of a particular servant of the Caliph. 'Alī at once saw through the whole game. How was it, he asked them, that the courier with the letter was on his way to Egypt whereas all the three bands were back simultaneously? The roads to Baṣra, Kūfa and Egypt led in different directions. The return of the Egyptian band could be understood, but how to explain that of the other two and at one and the same time? The spot where the letter was said to have been intercepted was far off from Medīna and in that short interval of time, it was an obvious physical impossibility for word to reach the other two bands already at so many days' distance from the capital. The plan in reality was this. The conspirators on their first arrival found all Medīna ready in arms to oppose



them, should they force their way into the town. To lull them to security, they went back with loud protestations of their entire satisfaction. They only wanted to put the Medinites off their guard, to return under some other pretext and take them by surprise. This other pretext was supplied in the form of this forged letter. If it were a genuine interception, only the Egyptian band could possibly come back with it. The fact that the other two also re-appeared and at the same time, clearly shows that the whole thing was pre-arranged. They had gone in different directions and if they wanted to communicate the news to the bands of Baṣra and Kūfa, the Egyptians could have done it only by the route of Medīna. But by the time they arrived in Medīna, the other two should have reached their respective destinations. It was thus physically impossible for all the three to re-assemble at the same time unless pre-arranged. The whole thing thus was a huge hoax. The ring-leaders forged the letter and it was agreed that at a particular time all the three bands would turn on their heels and reach the capital at the same time. The letter, it is contended, bore the Caliph's official seal. There is nothing impossible in this. A counterfeit seal could easily be made. This exactly was the suspicion expressed by 'Uthmān himself when the matter was put up

before him. The allegation that the courier was one of the Caliph's servants was also a fabrication, as the servant was never produced as a witness. The Caliph demanded that to prove the charge they must produce witnesses but they were not able to present a single one. Another conjecture is that perhaps the letter was written by Marwān, without his master's knowledge. If so, at least that servant should have been produced as a witness and the whole thing would have come to light. This was not done. The absence of any witness, even of the alleged courier, is proof positive that neither the letter was genuine, nor the seal, nor the story that it was found on the person of a courier. If circumstantial evidence can be relied upon, surely there is in this case an overwhelming evidence of that nature to lead to the conclusion that the whole thing was a fabrication pure and simple, a mere pretext to return and capture the capital unawares. When confronted by 'Alī with the most relevant question as to how it was possible for all the three bands to reach Medina simultaneously, the conspirators simply replied: "The Caliph's seal is there and that is enough." 'Alī took the ring-leaders to the Caliph but their behaviour towards the old venerable companion of the Prophet was most insolent.



'Uthmān affirmed on solemn oath that he had neither written the letter nor knew anything about it. The conspirators pointed to the seal. The Caliph pleaded complete ignorance of how it came to be there. Had there been not a shred of other evidence, the solemn oath of a man of 'Uthmān's righteousness should have sufficed to convince that in this matter the hands of the Caliph were absolutely clean. In reply to his denial, however, the conspirators resumed their insolence. "Whether you have written this letter or whether someone else has written it, in both cases, you are unfit for the office of the Caliph and you must abdicate." "Abdicate I will not ;" replied the aged Caliph, "how can I throw off the mantle which God has put on me. Tell me where I am wrong and I am open to correction." The conspirators repeated their demand. "It is now too late for any correction," they said. "There are only two alternatives now—either you must abdicate or here is the sword to make you abdicate or to finish with you." To this insolent threat the old Caliph replied with his characteristic calmness and gentleness : "As to death, I have no fear of it and consider it the easiest thing. As to fighting, if I wished such a thing, there would to-day have been

thousands here to fight for me. But I cannot find it in my heart to be the cause of shedding a drop of Muslim blood." Thus dropped the curtain on this painful scene of insolence to an old unprotected monarch of four kingdoms. The seditionists rose and went away with ominous determination in their looks.

The Caliph is maltreated and imprisoned in his house.

The town was in the hands of the seditionists. The Caliph and the companions, nevertheless, were as yet free to attend the mosque for daily prayers. Once in the mosque, the Caliph rose to address a few words to the people, but he was not allowed to speak. Dust was thrown on his face and his supporters were thrust aside. The ring-leaders made it a point not to let the Caliph say a word to the public. They knew full well that if the whole truth about the forged letter and the plot were disclosed, their own dupes would desert them. Then came Friday and the congregation prayer. The Caliph as usual stood on the pulpit and addressing the seditionists reminded them of the Prophet's curses on them and exhorted them to show repentance. The reference was to a prophecy in which the Prophet had mentioned a few places and said that those encamping there would have the curse of God on them.

Now these bands of seditionists had on their first unsuccessful incursion on the capital actually encamped at these spots. At the mention of the prophecy they kicked up a row in the mosque. Distinguished companions such as Zaid-bin-Thābit and Muḥammad-bin-Muslim rose to support the Caliph in this view but the ring-leaders caught hold of them and forced them to sit down. Then followed a volley of pelting on the Caliph, the companions and the Medinites. One man snatched the Imam's reclining rod from the Caliph's hand and broke it. Then came stone after stone pouring down on him. His aged limbs gave way and he fell to the ground senseless. He was removed to his house and thenceforward he was stopped from attending the mosque. His house was blockaded. The capital was astir and full of feeling for the Caliph. A handful of men were posted at his door to prevent the seditionists from breaking in. 'Alī, Ṭalḥa and Zubair, placed their own sons there fully armed to defend the Caliph with their blood. This spontaneous demonstration of public sympathy, for a while, damped the violent spirits of besiegers. As yet they were afraid of carrying things to the extent of blood-shed. But the blockade was so rigorously maintained that even the supply of

water was stopped. 'Alī tried to persuade them that the treatment they were meting out to the Caliph of Islam was sinful even towards the worst enemy of Islam. They were, however, unmoved. At length, Umm-i-Ḥabība, the Prophet's widow, in person riding on a mule tried to carry water into the Caliph's house, but in vain. Even she was shown no respect by these insolent people. She was roughly handled and with difficulty escaped a fall.

Medina Muslims  
were averse to  
shedding Muslim  
blood.

An important question arises here as to the attitude of the people of Medīna among whom were such influential men as 'Alī, Ṭalḥa and Zubair. Why did they keep quiet and let the rebels have their own way with the Caliph? Was it not their duty to defend his person from insult and harm, even at the sacrifice of their own lives? This question has been the puzzle of many historians who, not being able to account for it, have been misled into a great blunder. They believe that though 'Alī, Ṭalḥa and Zubair were not in conspiracy with the rebels, nor did they wish to help them, yet they watched the whole thing not without some feeling of gratification. In other words, they were also displeased with 'Uthmān and therefore kept looking on while this infamous

persecution and crime was going on, without raising so much as a little finger in the defence of the helpless Caliph. They let things have their own course. This is quite a mistaken view of the situation. In the first place, the town was entirely under the domination of the rebels, and they, being the masters of the situation, were free to do as their sweet will dictated, the people of the town being quite helpless. Then comes the second question that if the Medinites could not in any way restrain the hands of the rebels, it was open to them at least to strike a blow and honourably fall in the attempt. In fact this was the call of duty and the call of honour. Now, with regard to this, it must be remembered that the Medinites were in every way prepared to defend the Caliph with the last drop of their blood. An armed posse was posted at his door. The sons of 'Alī, Ṭalḥa and Zubair were also there, ready to lay down their lives in his defence. But they could not, under the law of Islam, strike the first blow. The rebels had not as yet unsheathed the sword. Under these circumstances the Caliph himself was against the use of the sword. In fact, in his official capacity as Caliph he had positively forbidden the people of Medīna to raise their hands

against the rebels. The situation was no doubt critical but that was no justification to ignore the Caliph's word. It was the duty of the people to obey his order and his order emphatically called upon every Muslim not to unsheathe his sword against the rebels. What could the Medinites do? Besides the Caliph's imperative order, there was, as they well knew, the clear injunction of the Qur'an not to be the first in unsheathing the sword even against an enemy of Islam. How could they take the initiative in shedding the blood of their own fellow-Muslims? Of course, they were ready to draw the sword no sooner the enemy should do so, and ready to lay down their lives in the Caliph's defence. They were only waiting for the rebels to draw the sword first. On the other hand, the rebels also were loath to go to that length in the face of the Quranic prohibition. Of course, there were some who had no scruples and were prepared to go to any extremity. But barring these, the ring-leaders, the bulk of the rebels were only the dupes of a clever propaganda and their leaders could not afford to flout such an important injunction of the Qur'an. That would have at once alienated from them the sympathies of their dupes. In all this conflict, therefore, they had to put up

appearances and maintain some show of reason and reverence. And hence they hesitated to take this extreme step. Thus there was a state of armed suspense on both sides. Both sides wanted to avoid blood-shed, at least not to incur the heavy curse of starting the bloody game. This was the reason that the rebel-leaders were restraining themselves to mere pressure on the Caliph to make him abdicate. The Medinites' hands on their side were equally bound by the law of Islam and hence they kept quiet. Besides, they never thought that the rebels would have the audacity to transgress those sacred limits and spill the blood of any Muslim, much less of the Caliph.

Such was the state of things when Annual Pilgrimage. there arrived the season of the Pilgrimage to Mecca. Though under a strict blockade, the Caliph was not unmindful of the duties of his office. From the top of his house, he issued the necessary instructions to the people, and appointing Ibn-i-'Abbās the head of the pilgrim caravan, bade the people set out on the pilgrimage. Ibn-i-'Abbās was one of those who kept guard at the Caliph's door. He was loath to leave that post of sacred duty but there was the Caliph's order which he must obey. He went and so did some others, including 'Āyesha, the Prophet's widow. She wished to have her brother,



Muhammad-bin-Abū Bakr for her convoy but he was far too busy otherwise. He was one of the ring-leaders and could not afford to be away when things were about to come to a head. The fact that the people of the capital went on the pilgrimage shows that they had no apprehension that the rebels would resort to bloodshed. The Caliph was hard-pressed for abdication. He sent word, through the Medina pilgrims, to the assemblage of pilgrims at Mecca, explaining the situation. He said he had done nothing objectionable and the rebels were bent on mischief, spreading all sorts of calumnies against him and inciting others to disown his authority. He also wrote letters to the Governors telling them that mischief was exceeding all limits and some measures must be taken. The idea was that the arrival of help from outside would in itself serve as a pressure on the rebels and mischief would thus come to an end without bloodshed.

The Caliph is  
slain, 18 Dhulhajj  
35 A. H. 17 June  
656.

But on the other side the rebels could not afford to let things drift as they did. They were well aware that a few days more and their schemes would be undone. The general populace assembled at Mecca would come to know of their mischief and flock to the capital. Troops would also arrive to the Caliph's rescue. There was thus



no time to lose. The capital was almost empty, people having gone on pilgrimage. The momentous hour had arrived, the hour to strike the blow. It was already the 18th of Dhulḥajj and in a few more days crowds of pilgrims would be pouring into the streets of Medīna. Consequently, the rebels made an attempt to force their way into the Caliph's house and finish with him. The guard of armed men at the door stuck to their position. They were, however, but a handful and the space was very narrow. After some exchange of blows and thrusts, the guard took up their position on the inside of the door, closing it against the assailants. Attempt was made to break open the door but it did not succeed. It struck the ring-leaders that while the guard was thus occupied, they should steal in through some other way and quietly commit the black deed. A few of them, consequently, went round to a neighbouring house and from there let themselves down into the inner quarter of the Caliph's house. The Caliph in the midst of his family was at the time reciting the Qur'ān. The venerable hoary-bearded man with his family members around him and with the Book of God open before him—it was a scene of peace and innocence which, for a moment, held even the callous intruders in awe. They hesitated to shed the blood of a man they

knew to be quite innocent and harmless. But this feeble inner whisper was soon hushed up. Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr stepped forward and held the Caliph by the beard. "O son of my brother," the old man calmly said, "if your father were alive, he would have known better how to treat these grey hair." Overwhelmed with shame, the son of Abū Bakr shrank back. The more callous then stepped forward and struck their helpless victim with their swords. The Caliph's wife interposed to shield her husband. Her fingers also got chopped off. The house-hold servants also offered resistance. One man was killed and the rest were soon overpowered. At last, the Caliph fell bleeding and dead on the spot. He was then 82 years of age. The news of the tragedy reached the unsuspecting guard at the outer door. They all rushed in but it was too late. The rebels having finished with the Caliph now rushed on the treasury, but found nothing there. Whatever money used to come in was spent on public welfare. The news came as a thunderbolt to the people that were still there in the town. But any opposition was now useless. The rebels dominated the whole town. The body of 'Uthmān could with difficulty be interred on the third day.

• Uthman sacrificed his life for the Unity of Islam.

There are some who are inclined to attribute these seditious activities culminating in the tragic end of 'Uthmān, to the Caliph's own weakness. A more thoughtful critic, however, would hesitate to fling such a charge in the face of one whose glorious career as a Caliph was crowned with a martyrdom yet more glorious. No man is free from the common frailties of the human race and 'Uthmān was but a man. Flaws and frailties there might have been in him just as in all of us, but in the present case to accuse him of any weakness of resolution or lack of courage is a gross travesty of facts and a most cruel cut to the memory of one who faced the assassin's sword with such calm and dignity. Though old in years, 'Uthmān certainly displayed the energy and courage of youth throughout his Caliphate and even in his death. No sooner he took the reins of power in hand, than he had to face a general wave of revolts or invasions. There was insurrection in Persia. There was an invasion upon Syria, an invasion upon Egypt, by land as well as by sea. The question is, how did he demean himself under this most trying situation. Did he play the coward and shrink before this tide of difficulties? Let facts speak for themselves. Not only was the insurrection in Persia thoroughly quelled, but the

flag of Islam was carried farther off over vast territories, right to the confines of Ghaznī. On the Syrian front, the Romans were driven back, pursued and defeated in their own lands, and the flag of Islam proudly fluttered on the coast of the Black Sea. Rome was proud of being the mistress of the seas, yet on her own element she was humbled by the Arab soldiers who had never seen naval warfare before. On the soil of Africa too, the hosts of the Romans were thoroughly defeated. Were all these the achievements of a weak man, of a man who would shrink before difficulties and dangers? In these perilous times, 'Uthmān steered the bark of Islam with a composure of mind and steadiness of hand, that should entitle him to a place among the greatest leaders of men. Under him the crescent was carried farther and farther and shone brighter and brighter, on land and, for the first time, on sea. It is thus a great injustice to the memory of this great son and servant of Islam to interpret as pusillanimity what in fact constituted the crowning act of his glory, *viz.*, his martyrdom. It was certainly no weakness that made him so indulgent towards the insurgents. A man who could deal with the hundreds of thousands of Roman hosts would certainly not cow down before a rowdy rabble. He could smash them with his little

finger if he had wished to. But he would be the last man on earth, he said, to be the cause of shedding a drop of Muslim blood. That would shatter the solidarity of the house of Islam. Even at the last stage when the besiegers' swords were most wantonly dangling in his face, he stood for the cause of that solidarity and under express orders forbade the townsmen to unsheathe their swords. And it may legitimately be said of him that he offered his own life as a sacrifice at the altar of that solidarity, thereby serving as a beacon-light to all the coming generations of Islam to keep their ranks well closed, and never to unsheathe the sword against a brother Muslim nor wish him any harm, even though one were to lose his own neck.

Prophets, great  
qualities mirrored  
forth in the first  
four Caliphs.

The period of the first four Caliphs was in fact a continuation of the Prophet's own life, inasmuch as each one of these great luminaries mirrored some one particular phase of that life in full resplendence. Abū Bakr was an embodiment of the Prophet's firmness of faith and resolution that knew no wavering under the most trying circumstances. 'Umar reflected in his person the Prophet's domination over the opponents of Islam. And 'Uthmān illustrated in letters of his own blood the Prophet's unbounded affection for his

community. In simplicity of life and devotion, 'Uthmān walked in the footsteps of his two illustrious predecessors, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. He never looked at the enormous wealth that came pouring into the public treasury in his reign, spending every penny on public good, and in this respect too he proved himself a worthy successor to his great Master.

'Uthman took  
nothing from the  
public treasury.

The financial services that 'Uthmān rendered to the cause of Islam during the life-time of the Prophet show that he must have been a very big merchant and withal a most generous man. It was a period when the Muslims were in very straitened circumstances, yet even then 'Uthmān spent thousands, nay hundreds of thousands in the cause of Islam. This should give some idea of the riches he must have possessed. And when the Muslims fell on better days and became rich, 'Uthmān's wealth must have increased in the same proportion. But money had little value in the eye of the companions of the Prophet. Just as 'Uthmān spent lacs in the service of the Faith, likewise he showed great generosity towards his relations. For instance, he gave a lac of Dirhams as dowry to one of his daughters. This, let it be remembered, was his personal property and there was no harm in it. A man who could afford to spend lacs in the cause

of the Faith was certainly justified in giving away a lac out of consideration for ties of blood. It is a baseless allegation to say that for his generosity towards his relations, he drew upon the public treasury. His hands are clean of any such stain. Rather than take anything from the public treasury he liberally spent his own wealth for the public good. An amount was duly sanctioned from the public treasury to meet the personal needs of the Caliph. But 'Uthmān did not draw even this sum. On one occasion he called a general meeting of the Muslims and addressed them to vindicate his position against such allegations. The following is a part of his address, as quoted by Ṭabrī:

“When the reins of Government were entrusted to me, I was the biggest owner of camels and goats in Arabia. To-day I possess neither a goat nor a camel, save the two that are meant for the Pilgrimage. Is this true? (The people replied, it was so.) It is alleged that I have given the war-spoils to Ibn-i-Abī Sarḥ whereas I have only given him the fifth of a fifth of these spoils which comes to a hundred thousand.\* This was exactly what Abū Bakr and 'Umar used to give. When,

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\* 'Uthmān gave this sum to this General in fulfilment of a promise that if Tripoli was conquered, he would be entitled to one-twenty-fifth of the spoils.



however, the people disapproved of it, I took even this much back from him. . . . It is further alleged that I love my relations and I give them riches. As regards my love for them, it has never induced them to usurp the rights of others. I put upon them the obligations that are due from them. As regards my generosity towards them, I give them, whatever I do, out of my own property. As regards public property, I consider it lawful neither for myself nor for anyone else. Even during the time of the Prophet, Abū Bakr and 'Umar, I used to give large sums out of my own earnings. This I did when I was yet a young man and as such stood in need of money. Now that I have reached the normal limit of my family age and my days are coming to a close and I have made over all my possessions to my family, the misguided people say such things of me. By God I have taxed no city beyond its capacity so that such a thing might be imputed to me. And whatever I have taken from the people I have spent on their own welfare. Only a fifth of it comes to me. Out of this too, I consider nothing lawful for my personal use. This is spent on the deserving people, not by me, but by the Muslims themselves and not a farthing out of public funds is misappropriated. I take nothing out of it, so that even what I eat, I eat out of my own earnings."



Every word of this address delivered before a packed mosque, was corroborated by the audience. This shows that during his Caliphate, 'Uthmān accepted nothing from public treasury for his personal use, though he had every right to it. He spent the whole of it on the advancement of public welfare and himself did not cast a glance at it. Nay, during his last days, he spent the whole of his wealth—and he was a millionaire—on public good, thus proving himself a worthy successor to the Holy Prophet.

**'Uthmān's Reign.** The reign of 'Umar stands out so conspicuous in respect of the territorial expansion of the Empire of Islam, and mighty empires fell before the arms of Islam, one after another, in such quick succession that subsequent conquests dwindle into insignificance before their magnificence. But the fact is that the reign of 'Uthmān was no less a period of the strength of Islam. No signs of weakness are seen in the power of Islam under him. Suppression of rebellion and anarchy is as important as territorial expansion. And 'Uthmān had only been six months on the throne of the Empire when Persia raised the standard of rebellion. He put it down with a heavy hand. Not only was the subject territory cleared of all insurrectionary influences but as a measure of strategic necessity,

further territory was also annexed to the Empire of Islam, such as Afghānistān, Turkistān and Khurāsān. This revolt had hardly been suppressed when the Roman Empire invaded Syria. Here too the forces of Islam displayed considerable strength. The Roman hordes were driven off, and over and above this, such territories as Armenia, Azarbijān and Asia Minor were added to the Empire of Islam. It was during 'Uthmān's reign that the first naval conquests of Islam commenced, and Muslim ships captured the island of Cyprus. The Cæsar also invaded Egypt, and captured Alexandria. 'Uthmān's army not only re-captured Alexandria but it also turned westward to exterminate the Roman army altogether, and the Empire of Islam was largely extended and fortified in that direction. All this should suffice to show that the power of Islam was at the zenith of its glory during the reign of 'Uthmān. Notwithstanding the fact that the Caliph was murdered and there was an insurrection in Medina, the very heart of the Empire of Islam, no foreign dependency had the courage to rise in revolt. Such was the prestige the power of Islam had attained during the reign of 'Uthmān.

**Administration.** There was absolutely no change in the form of government during the reign of 'Uthmān. The machinery of government

was worked exactly on the lines that had so far grown up as a peculiar institution of Islam. The same were the powers of the Caliph, the same his rights over the public purse. The *Majlis-i-Shūrā* or council of consultation was also maintained and all affairs were settled by this council. The Caliph kept himself fully informed of the state of things in the various parts of the Empire. Every Friday, before prayers, he would gather whatever information he could, from those in the mosque. There was no obstacle in the way of approaching the Caliph with a complaint or grievance against a Governor or public servant. Every such case received full and prompt attention. All the departments of state worked as during the reign of 'Umar. The Revenue Department was in a much more flourishing condition. The subsidy from Egypt alone went up from twenty to forty lacs. With the swelling of income, stipends that were awarded from the public treasury were also increased. Many new buildings were erected. Roads, bridges, mosques and guest-houses were constructed in different towns. Adequate provision was made for the comfort of way-farers along all the routes leading to Medīna. Military posts and caravanserais, together with water fountains, sprang up all over. To protect Medīna against

floods a huge dam was constructed. The Prophet's Mosque was extended and rebuilt with stone. Farms to breed horses and camels were opened on a large scale and water arrangements were also made there.

Standardization  
of the Qur'an.

In the record of 'Uthmān's services in the cause of Islam, one particular service must stand at the top. It was he who had copies made from the only authentic copy of the Qur'ān, and had them sent to the big centres of the Empire of Islam. This is an achievement of 'Uthmān of which the Muslims cannot be too proud. If to-day, all over the world of Islam, in the east and west, one and the same copy of the Qur'ān is met with in the hands of the various sects of Islam, the gratitude is due to 'Uthmān. When he came to know that people disputed among themselves as to the various copies of the Qur'ān then in circulation, he sent for the authentic copy prepared during the reign of Abū Bakr on the advice of 'Umar. It was in the custody of Ḥaṣṣa. 'Uthmān sent for it, had several copies of it made and sent, one to each one of the big centres of Islam, so that it might serve as a reference edition and the local editions might be corrected accordingly. This was an act of great far-sightedness on the part of 'Uthmān. In an age when the printing machine had not yet been

invented, no better arrangement could have been made to maintain the purity of the text of the Qur'ān. 'Uthmān was not the collector of the Qur'ān, as is generally thought, but, doubtless, he brought the whole of the world of Islam together on one single uniform edition of the Holy Book.

**Manners and morals.** From his very early life, 'Uthmān was gifted with a pure nature. Islam brought lustre to this inner gem. In chastity and integrity, 'Uthmān was as firm as a mountain. During his reign when worldly wealth found its way among Muslims in great abundance, 'Uthmān's integrity, 'Uthmān's honesty, 'Uthmān's chastity, 'Uthmān's piety wavered not thereby by so much as an hair's breadth. Riches had as little fascination for him when he earned lacs and spent lacs in the way of God as when he became the master of the richest treasury in the world. He scrupulously followed in the footprints of the Prophet. Modesty was the most salient feature of his character. Even the Prophet did not become as free with him as in the company of other companions. For instance, once he was seated while his knee happened to be uncovered. Abū Bakr and 'Umar were also there, but he took no notice of it. As soon, however, as the arrival of 'Uthmān was reported, he covered his knee. During his Caliphate, 'Uthmān in person conducted

the five daily prayers and was regular even in his mid-night prayers, notwithstanding the fact that he had already attained to the good old age of 80. When, however, he got up for his mid-night prayers, he took care not to disturb any of the servants for his own comfort. He was rolling in plenty; yet he contented himself with plain dress and plain food. Even his wife, he did not wish to see in much costly costume. His generosity has already been noted. It went to all alike, to his relations as well as others. His deep love of brother Muslims made him sacrifice his own life rather than wield the sword against them. Not only did he himself refrain from using the sword against Muslims, but he even stayed the hands of his associates to do so.

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## 'ALĪ

### Early life.

'Alī was the fourth Caliph of Islam after the Holy Prophet, and was also known by his *kunya* Abul Ḥasan. He was the son of Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet's uncle, under whose guardianship the Prophet, after the death of his grandfather 'Abdul Muṭṭalab, was brought up. His mother's name was Fāṭima. He came of the clan of Banū Hāshim which was considered the most respectable among the Quraish. The Prophet also belonged to the same clan. The high function of the custody of the Sacred House of Ka'ba was entrusted to this clan, and on account of this the Banū Hāshim were held in special esteem all over the peninsula. 'Alī was born in the thirtieth year of the 'Ām-ul-Fil (*i.e.* the year of the Elephant), ten years before the Call. Abū Ṭālib had a large family, and he had also brought up the Holy Prophet. Now that the Prophet found him in somewhat straitened circumstances he took upon himself the up-bringing of 'Alī. Thus, in addition to being a near kinsman of the Prophet, 'Alī was also bound to him by another tie. He had been brought up as a child in the Prophet's household.

Conversion to  
Islam and determi-  
nation to help the  
cause.

At the time of the Call, 'Alī was only a boy of ten. From his very childhood, he had been brought up in the house of the Prophet. So he knew all about him and was therefore among the foremost few who embraced Islam. Some are even of opinion that he was the first person to come into the fold. Nevertheless it is an admitted fact that that position fell to the lot of Khadīja. After her came Abū Bakr, Zaid bin Hārith and 'Alī. It is rather difficult to tell the exact order among these three. But probably it was Abū Bakr who joined Islam immediately after Khadīja. Though a mere boy at the time of his conversion, 'Alī showed remarkable enthusiasm in the propagation of the Faith. Once the Prophet invited his kinsmen to a feast. The idea was to give them the message of Islam. When the dinner was over, he addressed the party. "Who of you" said he "is coming forward to own allegiance to me and thereby become my friend and brother?" All remained silent. 'Alī alone got up and offered himself for the cause of the Faith. Thrice the Prophet repeated his exhortation, and thrice 'Alī responded. He was yet a boy, but who could then say that this youngster was destined one day to become a tower of strength to Islam.



*Flight to Medina.*

'Alī had a goodly share of the persecutions to which the Prophet and the rest of the Muslims were put in Mecca. Contemporary accounts take no specific notice of it because of his comparatively tender age. The climax of these persecutions was reached when all the Muslims had to quit Mecca in small batches and take refuge in Medīna. 'Alī played an important role on this occasion. Like Abū Bakr whom the Prophet detained to be a companion to him on the journey, 'Alī was also kept back. He was to return to the people, after the Prophet had left, whatever deposits they had kept with him. It is remarkable that while the Prophet was, on the one hand, the victim of bitter persecutions of his people, the same people would, on the other, deposit their valuables with him for safe keeping. So implicit was their confidence in his integrity ! 'Alī was at the time twenty-three years old. At night the enemies surrounded the Prophet's house and were waiting to fall on him when in the morning he should come out. The Prophet, however, made 'Alī occupy his bed and unnoticed by the besiegers, slipped out and escaped right through their midst in the dark of the night. 'Alī kept in the bed. When it was dawn, the besiegers were surprised to see 'Alī instead of the Prophet. They had no

grudge against him, nor could their purpose be served by doing him any harm. They were out to take the life of the Prophet and put an end to Islam. As instructed by the Prophet, 'Alī cleared up all accounts on behalf of him, and immediately this was done, he set out for Medīna. At Medīna, he put up with the Prophet, and subsequently when every emigrant was united in brotherhood with a Medīna resident, 'Alī enjoyed the honour of being so united with the Holy Prophet. According to another report, he became brother to Sahl bin Hunaiḥ.

**Marriage with Fatima.** In the first or second year of the Hijra, the Holy Prophet gave his daughter, Fāṭima, in marriage to 'Alī. 'Alī was about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age at the time while Fāṭima was nineteen or twenty. 'Alī lived a humble life. For the purpose of dowry money and wedding presents, he sold his camel, shield and some other articles for 480 dirhams. Three sons, Ḥasan, Ḥusain and Muḥsin, and two daughters, Zainab' and Umm-i-Kulthūm, were the fruit of this marriage. Of these, Muḥsin died in childhood. The children of no other daughter of the Prophet survived, and the offspring of Ḥasan and Ḥusain is known by the honoured title of Sayyid (lit. *Master*).

'Alī and Fāṭima were very fond of each other.

Once they fell out over a petty affair. 'Alī left the house and lay down in the mosque in dust. The Prophet happened to visit the family just then, and not finding 'Alī, enquired where he was gone. He was told what had happened and seeing him lie in dust in the mosque he said: "Get up, O *Abū Turāb*" (*i.e.* one lying in the dust) From this *Abū Turāb* came to be a surname of 'Alī. Fāṭima died at the early age of twenty-nine, and 'Alī married other wives after her and other children were born to him of these wives.

*Martial exploits.* 'Alī was yet a young man when he embraced Islam. So we do not hear of any activities of his in the way of the propagation of Islam, as those of *Abū Bakr*, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. Nor was he a man of riches. So it was not his lot to render financial services to the cause of Islam as did these three illustrious men. God had, however, gifted him with an extraordinary measure of daring which he devoted to the service of Islam and wrought wonderful deeds of heroism. At the battle of Badr, as also on other occasions, he was the bearer of the Prophet's standard. On the field of battle, three Quraishite youths came out and according to the custom in Arabia, challenged the army of Islam for single combat. On this, the Prophet detailed three men, 'Alī, Ḥamza and

'Ubaida, and all three overpowered their opponents. After this a general engagement ensued in which, too, 'Alī displayed his valour. In the third year of the Hijra when Muṣ'ab-bin-'Umair, the standard-bearer of Islam, fell fighting at Uḥud, 'Alī at once took hold of the standard, rushed forward and killed the standard-bearer of the enemy. For these wonderful exploits of 'Alī, a catch-phrase, *lā fatā illā 'Alī*, gained currency, *i.e.*, 'Alī is the one youth. It is stated that this cry was first raised by some one at the battle of Uḥud. In the fifth year of Hijra, 'Alī had to meet 'Amr bin 'Abd-i-Wudd, the famous warrior of Arabia, in a duel. This man was so proud of his bravery that when 'Alī, came out to measure swords with him, he said: "I do not wish to slay you". "But I do wish to slay you" retorted 'Alī. After a hard contest 'Amr-bin-'Abd-i-Wudd was killed. At the siege of Banū Quraiza as well, the standard was in the hands of 'Alī. In the sixth year of Hijra, he defeated the Banī Sa'd who were rallying to the reinforcement of the Jews of Khaibar. At the truce of Ḥudaibiyya, when the terms were drawn up, 'Alī acted as the scribe. The Quraishite representative objected to the words "God's Messenger" affixed to the Prophet's name in the treaty. The Prophet agreed to substitute "son of

'Abdullāh" instead. But 'Alī who had already written the words "God's Messenger" refused to delete them, and the Prophet did it with his own hand.

Of all the martial exploits of 'Alī, the most brilliant was the capture of Qamūṣ, the famous fort of Khaibar. The Jews had very strongly fortified this fort. The Prophet entrusted the standard first to Abū Bakr. There was a tough fight but the fort did not fall. He then entrusted it to 'Umar. The fight was fiercer than before and yet the fort withstood the onslaught. On this the Prophet said: "Tomorrow the standard will be in the hands of a man who will capture the fort, and who loves God and His Apostle and whom God and His Apostle love". Next morning when the Prophet came, he enquired about 'Alī. He had some eye trouble, he was told. The Prophet sent for him, applied his saliva to his eyes and prayed, and the trouble was no more. The Prophet then put the standard in his hand and the fort was captured.

When at the fall of Mecca, the Prophet entered the town at the head of 10,000 strong, the standard was in the hands of Sa'd bin 'Ubāda who, in overzeal, marched on shouting: "To-day is the day of bloodshed for Mecca". This was against the wishes of the Prophet who did not

like bloodshed. So he took the standard from Sa'd's hand and gave it to 'Alī. At the battle of Ḥunain, the main body of the Muslim army, unable to withstand the volley of the enemy archery, fell back. 'Alī however stood firm and wrought deeds of daring. The expedition of Tabūk was the only enterprize in which 'Alī did not take part. He stayed behind at Medīna under the Prophet's own orders. 'Alī did not like it, but the Prophet pressed him saying: "You stand to me in the relation in which Aaron stood to Moses, except that there is to be no prophet after me."

As an envoy and  
preacher of Islam.

After return from Tabūk, the Prophet sent a party of pilgrims to Mecca with Abū Bakr at their head. Thereafter he received a revelation declaring breach of relations with those Arab tribes that persecuted the Muslims and broke their solemn agreements. This is known as the chapter of Barā'a or Tauba. It was necessary to communicate this ultimatum to the enemy who assembled from all over Arabia on the occasion of the Pilgrimage. The choice to discharge this mission fell on 'Alī, who accordingly, made the announcement on the Pilgrimage occasion. In the tenth year of Hijra, 'Alī was deputed to carry the message of Islam to the people of Yemen. Before departure, the Prophet emphatically warned him against any



warfare so long as there was no aggression from the other side. This clearly shows that even after the revelation of the chapter Barā'a, the Prophet still acted up to the Quranic verse which permitted the Muslims to fight only against such non-Muslims as fought against them. 'Alī met with great success in this mission. The tribe of Hamdān embraced Islam in one day. 'Alī communicated the happy news to the Prophet who immediately fell on the ground in a thanksgiving prostration. Other people of Yemen also joined Islam gradually.

At the Prophet's death. 'Alī returned from Yemen before the Prophet's Farewell Pilgrimage to Mecca and joined the pilgrims. A few days after returning from the Pilgrimage, the Prophet fell ill. 'Alī tended him during this illness. One day during this period, 'Abbās suggested to 'Alī, to ask the Prophet to make a will for successorship in his favour. 'Alī, however, rejected the suggestion. At the Prophet's death, when Abū Bakr, 'Umar and other prominent companions were busy managing the affairs of state so as to avert any blow to the power of Islam in consequence of the Prophet's death, to 'Alī fell the privilege of looking to the funeral arrangements of the Prophet's body.

Oath of allegiance  
to the Caliph.

According to some reports, 'Alī did not take the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr for six months. If these reports are taken as authentic, perhaps the reason was that 'Alī kept at home to console Fāṭima who was much shocked at the Prophet's death. Besides this when Fāṭima demanded a share out of the property at Khaibar from which the Prophet took his maintenance, Abū Bakr replied that prophets left no property to be inherited. This offended Fāṭima. Possibly it was in sympathy with Fāṭima on this count that 'Alī refrained from taking the oath of allegiance for some time. When Fāṭima fell ill, Abū Bakr went to enquire after her health. This shows that Fāṭima's displeasure was only temporary. Or the reason may have been that 'Alī devoted his time to the arranging of the Quranic chapters in chronological order. Whatever the reason for not taking the oath of allegiance immediately, whether out of sympathy with Fāṭima or owing to being busy with the Qur'ān, 'Alī had no special grudge against Abū Bakr. When the apostates attacked Medīna, 'Alī took due part in the defence of the Capital. After Fāṭima's death, he participated in all counsels and affairs of state. After Abū Bakr's death he pledged fealty to 'Umar and was a prominent figure in the counsels of state in the



Caliphate of 'Umar. No important affair was settled without his advice. The friendly relations between 'Umar and 'Alī were further strengthened by the marriage of 'Alī's daughter, Umm-i-kulthūm, to 'Umar. After 'Umar, Alī's name was one of the six from among whom the Caliph was to be elected. When the majority went in favour of 'Uthmān, 'Alī forthwith stretched his hand and swore allegiance to the new Caliph. Towards the close of 'Uthmān's caliphate some mischief-mongers tried to make the caliphate a bone of contention and thereby bring about a rupture between 'Uthmān and 'Alī. 'Alī, however, was too shrewd and too noble to fall into their snare. When the insurgents' attitude towards 'Uthmān became threatening, 'Alī ordered his own son Ḥasan to keep guard at the gate of 'Uthmān's house.

'Alī becomes the Caliph.

During the last days of the reign of 'Uthmān, the insurgents, from the very day they effected their entry into Medīna, were in virtual possession of the town. The Government lost all hold over the capital. At the news of the murder of 'Uthmān, people generally kept within doors and a state of anarchy prevailed in Medīna. Of the three bands of insurgents, the one from Egypt which was the centre of Ibn-i-Sabā's machinations was the most

powerful. Their chief acted as the Imam at the daily prayers. This state of confusion lasted for five days. The three bands of insurgents could not come to an agreement regarding a successor to 'Uthmān. The Egyptian band, however, was the most dominant, and Ibn-i-Sabā, their leader, regarded 'Alī to be the rightful Caliph, in whose favour, it was alleged, the Prophet had made a bequest. 'Alī was, therefore, elected as Caliph by the insurgents and on 24th Dhul Ḥajj, 35 A. H., people swore allegiance to him. Most of the Medinites took the oath of fealty without any hesitation. Notwithstanding this, however, there is no doubt that it could not be called a free election. There was no occasion for any such election, the town being entirely in the hands of the insurgents. Nevertheless, it is equally true that in case a free election had been held, the choice would have even then fallen on 'Alī. On the previous occasion too, when 'Uthmān was elected, the final choice was between 'Uthmān and 'Alī. 'Uthmān had voted in favour of 'Alī and 'Alī in favour of 'Uthmān as the fittest person for the office of the Caliphate. 'Alī was even then given preference over such overtowering personalities as Ṭalḥa and Zubair, both of whom had to their credit a glorious record of services in the cause of Islam. 'Abdur-Raḥmān bin 'Auf

was another great man who was definitely in the public eye as a fit successor to 'Umar. 'Umar himself considered him as the fittest person for the Caliphate. He could have been a possible rival to 'Alī in a free election. But he had already passed away. Another prominent figure, Sa'd, the conqueror of Persia, had retired from public life. 'Alī was thus the fittest candidate left. Notwithstanding the fact, therefore, that the capital was dominated by the insurgents and a free election was not feasible, no one ever objected to the election of 'Alī on that ground—not even Ṭalḥa, Zubair or Mu'āwiya. Subsequent events show, no doubt, that Ṭalḥa and Zubair were not willing to render allegiance to 'Alī and did so only under compulsion. But their objection was based on the plea that before everything else, the insurgents who had assassinated 'Uthmān must be brought to book. They had no quarrel with 'Alī's personality whom they undoubtedly considered as the right man for the position.

Dissensions with-  
in the house of  
Islam.

With the advent of the reign of 'Alī, there opens a new chapter in the history of Islam. This period of four years and a half was a period of domestic dissensions within the house of Islam. In the internecine warfare that ensued, great and

prominent figures were involved. This exactly was the warning 'Uthmān had repeatedly given to the insurgents. "Once you draw the sword against me," he had told them, "you will be opening among the Muslims a door of dissensions that will never be closed." The warning turned out to be true. Till the reign of 'Uthmān there was practically no division in Islam. The disturbance of Ibn-i-Sabā was the handiwork of the hypocrites who, in the garb of Islam, wanted to undermine the power of Islam. Such of the Muslims as had made a common cause with them were their dupes. With the advent of the reign of 'Alī, however, the house of Islam itself was rent in twain. 'Alī thus found himself confronted with difficulties in no way smaller than those which beset the way of his three predecessors. Abū Bakr was faced with the insurrection of Arabia, and 'Umar with the legions of Persia and Rome, while 'Uthmān had to deal with rebels and insurgents. Each one acquitted himself in these difficult times with firmness and resolution. And likewise did 'Alī display his strength of character in the face of domestic dissensions among the Muslims.

Demand of re-  
tribution against  
'Uthman's assass-  
sins.

Having done the mischief and elected 'Alī as the Caliph, the insurgents left for their respective

places, so that they might take the news of their achievement to their respective headquarters. At the same time, the news of the assassination of 'Uthmān spread far and wide. His blood-stained clothes along with the chopped-off fingers of his widow were sent in original to Mu'āwiya in Damascus. From all sides came the cry for due retribution for the blood of the Caliph. Within the town of Medīna as well as in its suburbs arose the same cry. But there were great difficulties on the other side which can not be overlooked. The assassination of 'Uthmān was not the work of a few individuals who could be easily secured and executed. There were large bodies of men at the back of the conspiracy in all the three important centres, Baṣra, Kūfa and Fustāṭ. It was no easy task to deal with them. 'Uthmān himself hesitated to unsheathe the sword against these mischief-mongers. Such a step was sure to lead to a dangerous conflagration of disturbance. Things had now changed a little no doubt. The insurgents who had risen under the mask of demanding certain reforms in administration now stood exposed in their true colour. They had stained their hands with blood which was not only innocent but also the most precious. According to the law, both of religion and morality, they richly deserved

capital punishment. But to arrest these men and bring them to book would have meant a great and simultaneous disturbance in every corner of the empire of Islam. The inevitable result would have been the disruption of that empire. This was exactly what restrained the hands of 'Alī. When after his election, Ṭalḥa and Zubair demanded of him to punish the assassins of 'Uthmān, this was the very excuse he put forward. "I am no less anxious about it myself", replied 'Alī, "but I simply can not help it. It is a critical time, and if there is any disturbance of peace, the Beduins and foreigners will rise in revolt and Arabia will once more relapse into the days of Ignorance. These men are yet beyond our control. Wait and see till God should show me some way out of the difficulty."

**Appointment of new Governors.** It is not unoften that there arise complications in situations which make it impossible for two men with the best of intentions to arrive at the same conclusion. 'Alī was now face to face with such complications. On the one hand a vast number of people demanded that the assassins of 'Uthmān should be duly punished. On the other, the political situation was growing so complex that any attempt to take up the sword against those men was sure to endanger the peace of the whole



empire. There is not a shadow of doubt that 'Alī himself was anxious to visit the assassins of 'Uthmān with due retribution. But he deemed it advisable first of all to ensure the solidarity of the empire. It seemed to him that the first step to be taken in this direction must be to allay the agitation set afoot against 'Uthmān on account of his governors. Perhaps he also harboured some apprehensions from Mu'āwiya. Consequently he made up his mind to change all the governors. Mughīra advised him not to take this step. First of all, let people unanimously accept him as Caliph, he told him. He might then order whatever changes he thought proper among the governors. On his return from the pilgrimage to Mecca, Ibn-i-'Abbās too counselled him likewise. With regard to Mu'āwiya, he particularly told him not to interfere with him. He was not appointed by 'Uthmān and had been holding the office of governor from the time of 'Umar. He must therefore be let alone. 'Alī, however, did not listen to this advice for reasons known to himself. Possibly he apprehended some danger from Mu'āwiya and wanted to nip it in the bud. Or possibly he adopted the course of wholesale change, so that no one may have any cause for complaint. Consequently, he appointed 'Uthmān-bin-Ḥanīf as governor in place of

Ibn-i-ʿĀmir who was re-called. Qais was posted to Egypt where he succeeded in controlling the situation. The governors of Kūfa and Syria, however, refused to obey the orders. ʿAlī once more wrote to them urging them to submit. Abū Mūsā, the governor of Kūfa, submitted, but Muʿāwiya, after some time, sent a messenger to the capital with a blank letter. On enquiry, the messenger informed the Caliph that 60,000 men in tears were assembled at Damascus around the blood-stained shirt of ʿUthmān and were determined to avenge the blood of the deceased Caliph. He also told ʿAlī that they held him responsible for it. "Do they hold me responsible?" said ʿAlī in astonishment. "Don't you see," he added, "it is as yet beyond my power to pursue these assassins and punish them?" When the messenger went out, some people shouted that he must be put to death. The army was close at hand, came the threatening retort of the messenger.

ʿAlī t̄o, like ʿUthmān, was accused, in making the appointments of governors, of partiality in favour of his relations. Perhaps the reason was that he could not repose as much confidence in others, and when the fate of his Caliphate was hanging in the balance, he was justified in doing so. Or perhaps he preferred his own relations to conciliate the insurgents



whose ring-leader Ibn-i-Sabā attached special weight to the family of 'Alī.

War preparations against Mu'awiya. 'Alī could not possibly afford to ignore the attitude of Mu'awiya. A messenger from him had come with a significantly blank letter. He had definitely held out a threat that 60,000 men were ready to avenge the murder of 'Uthmān. 'Alī could not sit still in the face of this challenge. An important province of the Empire was rising in revolt. To put this rebellion down was the foremost duty of the Caliph. He delivered a sermon explaining that the attitude of Mu'awiya was calculated to undermine the solidarity of Islam. He knew that the seed of rebellion once sown was bound to spread to other provinces. And if each province declared its independence, the power of Islam was at an end. Rebellion could not be put down but by resort to the sword. A definite ultimatum had already come from Mu'awiya. There was no alternative left but to declare war against him. War preparations briskly began in Medīna.

Ayesha, Talha and Zubair demand retribution for 'Uthman's murder.

This, however, was not the only difficulty 'Alī had to face. Talha and Zubair also held, as already mentioned, that retribution against the assassins of 'Uthmān should be the

first thing that should engage the attention of the new Caliph. 'Alī pleaded before them his inability at that time to proceed against the assassins. But it seems this failed to satisfy Ṭalḥa and Zubair, who left for Mecca. On the way they met 'Āyesha who was returning from the Pilgrimage, and apprised her of the state of things in Medina. The Capital, they told her, was in a critical state. Chaos prevailed. The masses could not distinguish between right and wrong, nor could they defend themselves. Consequently, 'Āyesha turned back to Mecca along with them.

On arrival there all the people rallied to them. 'Āyesha recited the following verse from the Holy Qur'ān:—

“And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to God's command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; for God loves those who act equitably.” (49:9)

To the Muslims, their lives were meant for God. Before a commandment of God they attached little value to their ease and comfort, even to their lives. When duty called to fight against the unbelievers, they cheerfully laid down their lives in obedience to Divine behest. Now when within the house of Islam itself, one

group was transgressing to an extent that a resort to the sword was indispensable, they were equally ready to come forward with their lives. It was decided that the blood of 'Uthmān must be avenged. To let the assassins go scot-free would be to put a premium on their mischief-mongering. They had killed 'Uthmān; they might raise their hands against anybody they liked. It was, therefore, absolutely essential to bring them to justice. 'Āyesha, it seems, waited for some time in the hope that 'Alī might move in the matter. When nothing was done and, on the contrary, war was declared against Mu'āwiya, she was disappointed. A consultation was held and it was decided to proceed, first of all, to Baṣra. This shows that 'Āyesha had no ulterior motive, and that reform was her only objective. If she had any design on the Caliphate or if Ṭalḥa or Zubair wanted to wrest the Caliphate from 'Alī, they had an easy course before them. They were only to march against Medīna from the side of Mecca. On the north, there was Mu'āwiya with 60,000 men. There was as yet great agitation against 'Alī. Things had not settled down, and 'Alī's rule had not yet been established abroad. Within the Capital itself, there was no army. It was all plain sailing, if they only wished to seize the

Caliphate. This however, was not their object. They contemplated nothing against 'Alī. To punish the assassins of 'Uthmān was all they wanted. Consequently instead of marching against Medīna which was easy to capture, they turned towards Baṣra—this too at a time when full four months had already elapsed since 'Alī came to power. Their plan was to deal with the seditionists at Baṣra first and then proceed to Kūfa and Egypt and call the murderers to account.

Purity of their motives.

'Āyesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair and 'Alī were all but human beings and not infallible. Mistakes they may have committed but their motives were unquestionable. The first three were certainly out for reform and had no ulterior motives of their own. At the time of 'Uthmān's election too, Ṭalḥa and Zubair were among the six men whose names were proposed for the Caliphate. But they renounced their claims in favour of 'Uthmān and 'Alī. Even now after the assassination of 'Uthmān, 'Alī himself had offered to pledge fealty to either Ṭalḥa or Zubair but they had no inclination to shoulder the responsibility of the Caliphate. From the very first day, however, each insisted that the foremost thing to do was to deal with the assassins of 'Uthmān. This was no after-thought.

As regards 'Āyesha, she could not possibly be imagined to harbour any wish to succeed to the Caliphate. There are people who assert that she had a personal grudge against 'Alī, because he did not defend her honour when the hypocrites spread false reports against her. The fact is that when the Prophet consulted 'Alī, the latter advised him to ask the maid-servant. If she were to harbour any grudge on this account, she should never have forgiven men like Ḥassān and Miṣṭaḥ who had taken a leading part in the slander. But if she had the magnanimity to forgive even those men who had taken a prominent part in sullyng her honour, it is ridiculous to allege that for such a trifle on the part of 'Alī as already mentioned, she would for so long have nursed grudge against him. And her conduct on this occasion shows clearly that she bore no grudge to 'Alī. Her demand was the same as the demand of many other leading men and women. And it was simply to fulfil this demand that 'Āyesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair proceeded to Baṣra after waiting for full four months, when the Caliph himself did nothing to punish the culprits. Their real object was none other than bringing the insurgents and assassins to book. 'Āyesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair honestly believed that it was

the Muslims' first and foremost duty to punish the miscreants who murdered the aged and innocent Caliph of Islam in cold blood. The Quranic verse quoted above made it incumbent on them to fight against those who had rebelled against and murdered the Caliph of Islam. A report in the *Muwattā* of Imam Muḥammad clearly ascribes to 'Āyesha the words that it was not proper to neglect the said verse. Her brother Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr was one of the insurgents but she did not care for him either. Her mind was set on the one object to carry out the Quranic injunction by fighting against the transgressors and restoring good relations among the Muslims. This exactly was the object of Ṭalḥa and Zubair. They may have erred so far as their judgment was concerned. But they were certainly inspired by nothing but the purest of motives. Notwithstanding the loss of thousands of lives, their action had on the whole a salutary effect on the political situation. Nevertheless, later on, 'Āyesha herself regretted this line of action which shows that she realized her error of judgment. This should only go to enhance her position in our estimation. These noble souls were so submissive to the Divine injunctions that so long as they believed a thing to be true, they readily underwent every



form of hardship for it and shrank not even to lay down their very lives. No sooner, however, they realized that their judgment was at fault, than they as readily confessed their mistake. The right course was that even though 'Ali were committing a mistake, 'Āyesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair should have followed him. In order to punish the insurgents, they should not have taken the law in their own hands. It was for the authority constituted by law to see that the ends of justice were met. The fact, however, remains that it was an error of judgment inspired by the best of motives and even God does not make such error of judgment anything culpable.

'Āyesha captures  
Basra, Rabi II, 36  
A. H., Oct. 656.

In the fourth month of the Caliphate of 'Alī, an army under the direction of 'Āyesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair marched from Mecca towards Baṣra. On the way, they came upon a pond which, some of the party observed, was the pond of Ḥau'ab. Just then was heard the barking of dogs which reminded 'Āyesha of a prophecy of the Prophet that the dogs of Ḥau'ab would bark at one of his wives. On this, she at once thought of retracing her steps. Many people, however, came forward to testify that it was not the pond of Ḥau'ab. They also pressed her not to go back. Perhaps her presence might



improve the situation, they said. When 'Alī came to know that an army was marching against Baṣra, he turned that way instead of Syria as originally planned. 'Āyesha had already reached the destination. On her arrival at the outskirts of Baṣra, the Governor of the town sent two men to ascertain what had brought the noble lady there. In reply she said that her object was to restore better relations between the Muslims which was a duty incumbent on every Muslim, man or woman. She pointed out how the rebels had attacked Medīna, created disturbance there, killed the innocent Caliph of Islam, pillaged others' property and oppressed people. The Governor, however, refused to surrender the town, and marched forth with his forces to prevent her entry into the town. At last when the two armies came face to face with each other, 'Āyesha once more explained that the object of her visit was nothing but the arrest of the assassins of 'Uthmān. The following few sentences from the speech she made on that occasion speak for themselves:

“People used to find fault with 'Uthmān and his officers. They would come to Medīna and consult us. They understood whatever advice we gave them about keeping peace and order. When we considered the grievances they had against 'Uthmān, we found 'Uthmān innocent, God-fearing

and truthful and these agitators, sinful, treacherous and liars. Their hearts concealed one thing whereas their lips gave utterance to another. When they gathered strength, they entered the house of innocent 'Uthmān without any just cause and shed the blood which was not lawful to shed. They plundered what it was not lawful to take. They desecrated the soil whose sanctity it was their duty to respect. Now listen! The work before us which it does not behove us to neglect is to arrest the assassins of 'Uthmān and see that the law of God has its way."

To fight or shed blood was certainly not the object. The only idea was to come to an understanding by mutual discussion. Some of the Baṣrites were even impressed and joined 'Āyesha. For another day also, the armies remained encamped against one another but it was strictly prohibited to raise the sword. Among the Baṣrites, however, there was a group of mischief-makers. They were on the look-out for some opportunity to stir the mischief. One of them advanced forward and made an attack. 'Āyesha made her army retreat and encamped elsewhere the following day. The mischief-makers, however, did not desist. One of them used filthy language against 'Āyesha and cleverly added fuel to the flames. They at last delivered a general attack. 'Āyesha had it proclaimed that she did not want to fight. But the presence in the Baṣra army of the band of mischief-makers made all her attempts to maintain

peace and order abortive. The fighting began. 'Āyesha's army was also compelled to strike back in self-defence. The Baṣrites sustained heavy casualties and sued for quarters. Truce was concluded on the condition that some one may be sent to Medīna to ascertain whether Ṭalḥa and Zubair had pledged allegiance under compulsion. In case it was so, Baṣra would be made over to them; otherwise they would voluntarily leave the town. The messenger went to Medīna but opinion there was found to be conflicting. The majority however were inclined to think that it was a case of compulsion. In short, no decision was arrived at, and the mischief-makers, finding an opportunity, made a night-attack on 'Āyesha. They were repulsed and on October 17, 656, 'Āyesha's troops occupied the town.

'Āyesha was against fighting. It is obvious from what has been stated above that 'Āyesha never wanted any fighting of the Muslims against each other. On the other side, however, there had come into being a regular party which, not content with the murder of 'Uthmān, wanted to create a disturbance and undermine the power of Islam. The misfortune was that in order to gain their own ends, they were apparently espousing the cause of 'Alī. In reality they had little sympathy for 'Alī either, as subsequent events

will abundantly show. They had, however, mixed themselves up with the army of 'Alī. The fighting at Baṣra was entirely due to their mischief and so was the battle of Jamal in which more Muslim blood was shed. It was one of these men that later on killed Zubair while he was saying his prayers. These people declared 'Āyesha and her associates to be *kāfirs* for the only reason that they demanded retribution for the blood of 'Uthmān. The letter which 'Āyesha wrote to the people of Kūfa after her entry into Baṣra clearly says :

“On arrival at Baṣra, we invited the people of the town to abide by the Book of God. The nobler elements of the residents welcomed our exhortation but those who had little good in them took the sword against us. They threatened to despatch us as well after 'Uthmān and out of their enmity declared us to be *kāfirs*, saying unworthy things of us. We recited to them the Quranic verse: “Hast thou not seen the people who have been given a portion of the Book” and so forth. Hearing this, some of them came round to submission whereas others differed. We let them alone; yet they wielded the sword against us.... For twenty-six days, we invited them to the Book of God, that is to say, barring the guilty ones, all innocent bloodshed should be avoided. They argued against us, yet we entered into a truce with them. They played false and got up an army. God thus arranged for the retribution for 'Uthmān's blood. With the exception of one, not one of these insurgents escaped alive. God

reinforced our power with the tribes of Qais, Rubāb and Azd. Now listen! Treat all people well, except the assassins of 'Uthmān until God has made them pay His dues. Don't defend these traitors nor give them quarters."

Another of 'Āyesha's letters says:

"Even then they did not recognize the truth and not content with this, once in the dark of the night, they stole into my camp to kill me. They were yet on the threshold, one man showing them the path, when they met some men of the tribes of Qais, Rubāb and Azd, keeping guard at my door. The wheel of fortune took a turn and the Muslims killed them. God has brought together all the people of Baṣra on the opinion of Ṭalḥa and Zubair. After retribution, we will grant them pardon."

'Alī's attack on  
Baṣra and negotia-  
tions with Ṭalḥa  
and Zubair.

When 'Alī came to know that the Meccan army under the command of 'Āyesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair had gone ahead, he turned towards Kūfa. Abū Mūsa Ash'arī, the Governor of the town, though he had sworn allegiance, did not agree to 'Alī's policy. He too was greatly touched by the murder of 'Uthmān. 'Alī's envoys asked him to join the attack on Baṣra. On his refusal, he was dismissed. 'Alī succeeded in rallying some following at Kūfa and at the head of twenty thousand men encamped before Baṣra. Notwithstanding all this, however, 'Alī was as averse to fighting as 'Āyesha. Immediately on

his arrival at Baṣra, he sent Qa'qā' to Ṭalḥa and Zubair. Six hundred men of Baṣra had already paid with their lives for the blood of 'Uthmān, he told them. Another battle would mean another six thousand. The fratricidal warfare must, somehow, come to an end. He also emphasized that 'Alī too would not let the blood of 'Uthmān go unavenged, but he was helpless at the time. As soon as circumstances were more favourable, 'Uthmān's assassins would be brought to book. Ṭalḥa and Zubair also expressed their approval of this and negotiations continued for several days.

Battle of Jamal,  
Jumadi, II, 36  
A. H., December  
656.

As already stated, however, 'Alī's army had a considerable element of those who were accomplices in the conspiracy and assassination of 'Uthmān. When they saw that things were tending towards peace, they got alarmed. It meant their own doom. To save their own skins they must see to it that the Muslims were involved in mutual fighting. They met together to consider this unpleasant development and after consultation among themselves they quietly made a night attack on the troops of 'Āyesha, when both the armies were sound asleep. The result was that in the dark of the night, neither party could know who had started the fighting.



Each thought the other had played false. 'Alī did his utmost to stop it but fighting went on and Muslim cut the throat of brother Muslim. At dawn, people approached 'Āyesha and suggested that her appearance before the contending parties might have a salutary effect. Consequently, 'Āyesha mounted a camel—after which the battle is known as that of *Jamal* i.e. camel—and went about. On the other side, 'Alī sent for Ṭalḥa and Zubair and talked things over with them. What a strange spectacle! People supposed to be enemies met like friends in the very thick of the battle. The explanation is not far to seek. As a matter of fact, there were no personal motives behind the fighting. They only had the good of the Muslims at heart and wanted to see them united. They all hated bloodshed and were free from any selfish ends of their own. Right in the field of action, the three men whose armies were engaged in fighting, met one another and on 'Alī's persuasion, Ṭalḥa and Zubair both left the battle-field. Zubair straightway made for Medīna. A Sabaite was however on his heels and when in the desert he drew aside and began to say his prayers, this ruffian saw his opportunity. When Zubair went down in the posture of prostration, the fellow pounced upon him and chopping his head off, took it to 'Alī.



What was the reward he got from the latter? "Give the assassins of Zubair the news of hell," said he. Ṭalhā also was drawing aside from the battle when another ruffian made him the target of an arrow to which he succumbed. In spite of the officers who did their utmost to cry a halt, the dead and the dying fell in heaps. 'Āyesha had the Qur'ān hoisted by way of appeal to stop fighting but the conspirators killed the man who was holding the Holy Book aloft. At last, the centre of gravity of the fighting shifted to where 'Āyesha stood. These rogues did not hesitate to show rudeness even to the Prophet's wife. She was made the target of the attack and a most fierce fighting took place. Men fell thick and fast all around but the cordon formed around her camel was impregnable. At last when bloodshed exceeded all bounds, some one cut off the hind muscles of her camel at which the animal dropped down and the battle came to an end. Muḥammad bin Abū Bakr, the brother of 'Āyesha stepped forward and enquired if she was hurt. After a while came 'Alī too and enquired how she was. Then, with all due respect, he accommodated her in the house of a Baṣra chief of her own party and later on gave her a safe conduct to Medīna escorted by forty ladies and her own brother, Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr. The Caliph in person

saw her off to a considerable distance. She said that she had no grudge against 'Alī, neither then nor any time before that.

Affectionate Relations in warfare. From all these events, one thing is evident as broad day-light. Notwithstanding the fact that the contending armies lay encamped opposite to each other and the sword was busy working havoc and men like Ṭalḥa and Zubair were killed, their hearts were full of mutual affection and respect. Nowhere was there a vestige of grudge or ill-will therein. Everybody had the good of Islam at heart. Right in the thick of the battle, Ṭalḥa and Zubair met 'Alī as loving friends and accepted his suggestion. At the conclusion of warfare, 'Alī with all honour waits upon 'Āyesha and behaves as a dutiful son. The battle of Jamal, like that of the first battle of Baṣra, was due to the machinations of the conspirators who wanted to set the Muslims against each other and smash the solidarity of Islam. It must of course be admitted that this unscrupulous gang had taken shelter in the army of 'Alī who probably could not help it, as is evident from his repeated assurances. At the bottom of this warfare were the machinations of these mischief-makers. They had assassinated 'Uthmān but they were the enemies, not of 'Uthmān alone, but of all the Muslims. They

joined one party of them in order to destroy the Muslims at the hands of the Muslims. When the battle was over, 'Alī ordered that no one of the defeated army should be pursued, no spoils of war should be taken, nor should anyone enter the house of another. Of those who fell in this battle on either side, 'Alī observed: "Whoever joined it out of good motives, no matter on which side, will receive the mercy of God." So far as Mecca, Baṣra and Kūfa were concerned, the battle of Jamal set at rest the differences amongst the Muslims which had arisen in consequence of the murder of 'Uthmān. Syria, however, was still in a state of turmoil, and in order to restore the solidarity of Islam, 'Alī now turned towards that part of the Empire.

Kufa as Capital  
and calling  
Mu'awiya to  
submission.

Appointing 'Abdullāh-bin-'Abbās as Governor of Baṣra, 'Alī proceeded to Kūfa which was made the Capital of Islam instead of Meḍīna in the month of Rajab, 36 A. H. As stated before, Baṣra was a new colony which had sprung up during the reign of 'Umar. History does not chronicle the grounds which weighed with 'Alī in shifting the capital from Meḍīna to Kūfa. Many are the surmises made in this connection. To our mind, however, the obvious reason seems to have been that Meḍīna was too distant from the

eastern possessions of the Caliphate, and Kūfa, being a more central place, was more suited to be the capital of the vast empire. Besides, this centre could command greater influence over the Beduin population. There was a certain man, Ashtar by name. He was one of the insurgents against 'Uthmān, though he did not take part in his actual assassination. 'Alī kept this man along with himself. When he appointed 'Abdullāh bin-'Abbās, Ashtar was again forward with a complaint. "What have we gained," he observed, "out of the murder of 'Uthmān, Ṭalḥa and Zubair? 'Alī is now appointing his relations as governors." Arriving at Kūfa, 'Alī addressed another letter to Mu'āwiya, telling him that all was now quiet at Baṣra and in the interest of the solidarity of the empire of Islam, he too should submit. There was again no reply to the letter. After some time, Mu'āwiya sent word that his allegiance was bound up with retribution for the murder of 'Uthmān. 'Alī had no alternative left but to declare war against Mu'āwiya and war preparations were forthwith taken in hand.

Relations between  
'Alī and Mu'āwiya.

From the very beginning, relations between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya seem to have been strained. Mu'āwiya disliked the very election of 'Alī as Caliph and was in no way prepared to make allegiance. The sincerity of

purpose which inspired the opposition by 'Ayesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair was missing in the case of Mu'āwiya. No doubt 'Uthmān was a very near relation of Mu'āwiya and he had every right to press with greater force the demand for the punishment of the assassins. But his refusal even to acknowledge the two letters addressed to him by 'Alī clearly shows that he considered 'Alī's inaction in the matter as tantamount to his approval of the murder of 'Uthmān. This virtually was the verbal reply he sent him. On the other hand, there is no doubt about the fact that 'Alī had so far done nothing to crush the mischief-makers, of whom there was a strong element in his army, and who, in fact, were responsible for the battle of Jamal. 'Alī repeatedly pleaded his inability to deal with the assassins. It was not a matter of a few executions of those guilty of 'Uthmān's murder. The real object could not be achieved until the mischief-makers had been thoroughly crushed, their ring-leaders executed and their dupes disillusioned. Repeatedly did 'Alī put forward the plea that as yet his hands were not strong enough for such action. 'Ayesha, Ṭalḥa and Zubair accepted this excuse and gave up opposition. Mu'āwiya, on the other hand, rather than accept it as true, considered that 'Alī purposely shielded the

assassins. Most historians believe that Mu'āwiya's demand of the retribution for Uthmān's blood was not inspired by any high motives. If in his heart of hearts, he was not actually an aspirant to the Caliphate, one is at any rate, constrained to say that his attitude towards 'Alī was from the beginning unfriendly, and at last he rose in open revolt against him. Anyway, there arose on both sides circumstances which made mutual confidence impossible and for a final settlement recourse was had to the sword.

Battle of Siffin  
Dhīqa'd 36 A. H.  
April 657.

At the head of fifty thousand men, 'Alī marched out against Syria. On hearing about it, Mu'āwiya too mustered together his forces, and the two armies met at Şiffin, a place situated on the bank of the Euphrates, towards the south-east of Aleppo and the north-west of Hims. 'Alī had already had a bitter experience. He issued orders that his men must on no account strike the first blow. He also wished that an amicable settlement may be reached through negotiations. Consequently, for the first few days, nothing serious took place. 'Alī sent three men to Mu'āwiya asking him to come round to submission in the interest of the empire of Islam. In reply, Mu'āwiya reiterated the demand that he must first punish 'Uthmān's assassins. 'Alī dismissed this as a lame excuse.



"It is a lie," retorted Mu'āwiya, "and the sword shall be the sole arbiter between us." 'Alī divided his army into eight detachments. Only one was to engage the enemy every day. The idea was to avoid a general battle causing unnecessary bloodshed. The new year set in and warfare was suspended during the sacred month of Muḥarram. There were further negotiations for peace, but both the parties stuck to their own view-points and peace conversations led to no result. At last, when the month of Muḥarram was over, fighting was resumed. Once again, 'Alī had it proclaimed that it was incumbent on the people of Syria to submit to the Caliph. This, however, failed to create any impression. After some petty skirmishes, there at last came on Ṣafar 11, 37 A. H. (July 29, 657) a general engagement. The battle raged the whole day long but the issue was still undecided. It continued the following day but with the same result. Fighting was carried on even at night and when the third day dawned, hand to hand fighting was still going on. On the advice of 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ, Mu'āwiya had copies of the Qur'ān tied to spears and raised aloft, accompanied by the proclamation through the ranks that the Book of God was still there and must be accepted as arbiter. No sooner did this proclamation go forth than there arose the same



cry from the army of 'Alī as well. The miraculous power of the Qur'ān forthwith brought the battle to an end. On hearing the call to the Qur'ān, the contending armies immediately sheathed their swords. It is alleged that 'Alī was against the suspension of hostilities, telling his men that it was no more than a mere stratagem on the part of Mu'āwiya. The army, however, refused to listen to him. This allegation is absolutely untenable. The general attitude of 'Alī during the past battles and his treatment of his foes after the battle give the lie direct to any such assumption. It has been noted that 'Alī was bitterly opposed to the idea of warfare among the Muslims. A man of such a bent of mind could not possibly stand in the way of peace. The truth of the matter is that Ashtar went on fighting notwithstanding the truce. 'Alī sent for him and told him to stop fighting. The victory was quite at hand, he replied, and he was not prepared to suspend fighting at that stage. And he did not give it up until the rest of the army had compelled him to do so. 'Alī then enquired of Mu'āwiya as to what he wanted. Mu'āwiya proposed the appointment of two arbitrators, one from either side, and whatever their unanimous verdict on the authority of the Qur'ān, both the parties must abide by it. 'Alī appointed Abū Mūsā

Ash'arī and Mu'āwiya selected 'Amr-bin-Āṣ. It was decided, that the two, each accompanied by four hundred men of his own, should meet in a central place and decide the issue in accordance with the commandments of the Qur'ān. In case, the two could come to no agreement, the decision was to lie with the eight hundred men, and whatever the verdict of the majority, it must be binding on both the parties. This being settled, 'Alī left for Kūfa and Mu'āwiya for Damascus. Ashtar alone was dissatisfied at this arrangement.

**Desertion of Ali's troops.**

The truce put cold water on the schemes of the mischief-makers. While yet on the way back to Kūfa, a detachment of twelve thousand deserted 'Alī. When he arrived at Kūfa, the deserters encamped at a place called Ḥarūrā. The chiefs of the Kufite clans of Tamīm, Bakr and Hamdān were their ring-leaders. Apparently, they objected to the arbitration. The decision, they said, lay in the hands of God. What they really meant was that warfare must continue and the verdict of God may be considered in favour of whichever side won. As a matter of fact, they aimed at undermining the Caliphate. These were the very men, as already discussed, who, when 'Āyesha, Talḥa and Zubair came to Baṣra, called these righteous persons *kāfirs*. Likewise they declared

Mu'āwiya and his followers to be *kāfirs* and as such fighting against them was considered obligatory. 'Alī did not approve of this verdict of theirs, saying that though the opponents had rebelled against the Caliphate, they were brother-Muslims just the same and could not be dubbed *kāfirs*. 'Alī did his best to bring them round but to no avail. He dispersed their gathering at Harūrā. They nevertheless went on with their mischief-mongering activities.

The arbitrators' award, Sha'ban, 37 A.H. February, 658.

At the appointed date Abū Mūsā and 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ met at a place, Dūmatul Jandal, each with four hundred followers. A discussion took place between the two in a tent and every aspect of the question was duly considered. The final verdict of both was, as reports show, that 'Alī and Mu'āwiya should both be excluded and another man elected as Caliph. It was not, however, within the rights of these two arbitrators to elect another Caliph. It was for the general council of the Muslims to make such a choice. Both agreed on this decision. When they came out of the tent, 'Amr asked Abū Mūsā to announce his decision first. He delivered his verdict as agreed upon. Then came the turn of 'Amr. It is alleged that he played false and said that so far as 'Alī's dismissal was concerned, he

agreed with Abū Mūsā, but as regards Mu'āwiya, he supported him. The truth of the matter seems to be that the discussion between Abū Mūsā and 'Amr concerned the question of the Caliphate alone, and it was decided that 'Alī and Mu'āwiya should both be deprived of this office. The question whether or not Mu'āwiya should remain in office as Governor of Syria was not at all touched. Whatever 'Amr said, therefore, amounted to this that so far as the Caliphate was concerned, 'Alī and Mu'āwiya should both have nothing to do with it. As regards the governorship of Syria, however, he was in favour of Mu'āwiya continuing in office. 'Amr was a Companion of no mean position and to ascribe to him any treacherous motives is absurd on the face of it. It is nevertheless true that the decision failed to improve the situation in any way and bridge the gulf of differences. Things remained as they were. So long as Mu'āwiya was not to submit to the Caliphate, the solidarity of Islam could not be established. Nor could the election of a new Caliph serve any useful purpose. It must, however, be admitted that till the year 40 A. H. when 'Alī was murdered, Mu'āwiya did not assume the title of *Amīr-ul-Mu'minīn*, or the Commander of the Faithful. This shows that he was not a claimant to the Caliphate. As regards

the allegations that 'Alī cursed Mu'āwiya, 'Amr bin-'Āṣ and their associates, whereas Mu'āwiya cursed 'Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusain and their comrades, must be summarily dismissed as a story concocted later on.

Battle against  
the Khawarij  
Shawwal, 37 A.H.  
March, 658.

As soon as the decision of the arbitration became known, the Khawārij rose in open revolt.

*Khawārij* is plural of *Khārijī* which is derived from the root *kharaja*, meaning *he went out*. The first *Khawārij* were the 12,000 men who deserted 'Alī and encamped at Ḥarūrā after which they were called *al Ḥarūriyya*. The word *Khārijī* regarding them is, however, used not in reference to their *going forth* from Kūfa to Ḥarūrā but because they *went forth* from the community or brotherhood of Islam by declaring those who opposed 'Alī to be *kāfirs*. It was the Khawārij really who rent the unity of Islam by calling members of the Muslim brotherhood to be *kāfirs*, and this disease has now spread to the whole of Muslim community. Emerging from their strongholds of Baṣra and Kūfa, they advanced towards Madā'in, in order to take possession of it and establish their own rule there. The Governor of the place, however, got news of it in time and the

attempt failed. From here they proceeded upward and crossing the Tigris, four thousand of them mustered at Nahrawān. 'Alī, on his side, finding the decision of the arbitration unacceptable, made preparations to invade Syria again. At the same time, he summoned the Khawārij to submission, who, in the course of a harsh reply, called upon 'Alī to confess his own apostasy. In addition to this, they began to disturb the peace of the country and took to plundering. When 'Alī came to know of their activities, instead of Syria he set out against Nahrawān. On arrival there, he sent word to the rebels promising them general amnesty on the condition that they should hand over all those guilty of plunder and murder. His exhortations at last succeeded. Some of the Khawārij gave up opposition and went back. Some joined the forces of 'Alī. Eighteen hundred, however, did neither and gave him a battle in which they perished.

The Khawarij  
cause further  
trouble.

This, however, did not put an end to the disturbance of the Khawārij. Those who had left the field of Nahrawān, ostensibly under the pretence of giving up opposition, went to other places and took the conflagration there. They carried on a secret propaganda inciting people



against 'Alī. These Khawārij did not consist exclusively of those who had created the disturbance during the reign of 'Uthmān. They had even coined a certain creed of their own and given their movement a religious tinge. Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, this disturbance was only another phase of the one in the time of 'Uthmān. These people were the enemies of the empire of Islam and though, apparently, their mischief had subsided, they employed all possible underhand methods to undermine the foundations of that empire.

Having defeated the Khaw rij at Nahrawān, 'Alī made up his mind to march against Syria. The army, however, wanted to go back to Kūfa and equip itself anew with all the necessities of warfare, so that it should then be able to proceed to Syria. Consequently, 'Alī returned to Kūfa. On arrival home, however, the army lost its spirit and hesitated to proceed on the Syrian expedition. It seems the mischief-makers had done enough of poisonous propaganda and created disaffection in the army. Besides this, there arose some fresh developments in Egypt which compelled 'Alī to abandon the idea of Syria.



Mu'āwīya  
captures Egypt  
Safar, 38 A. H.  
July, 658.

'Alī had appointed Qais as Governor of Egypt. Qais was a most sober and shrewd statesman.

He did not at all interfere with the party in Egypt which demanded retribution for the blood of 'Uthmān. The party gathered considerable strength which was attributed by some to the weak policy of Qais. At last 'Alī recalled him, appointing Muḥammad-bin Abū Bakr in his place. A hot-headed man as the new governor was, he adopted a drastic policy of repression as soon as he arrived in Egypt. The result was that in the year 37 A. H., a widespread rebellion broke out in Egypt. Watching these events, Mu'āwīya ordered 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ to invade Egypt. 'Alī who was far away, sent Ashtar to re-inforce the Governor of Egypt. Before he could reach Egypt, however, he was poisoned by some border chief. 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ defeated Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr. Egypt thus came under the sway of Mu'āwīya and another slice was cut off from the kingdom of 'Alī.

Later period of  
'Alī's reign.

The loss of Egypt was another blow to the Caliphate of 'Alī. The Khawārij danger had also taken root and rearing its head now in one part, now in another, weakened the Empire. In 38 A. H., Baṣra was

once more the scene of a disturbance. Ibn-i-'Abbās, the Governor, was at the time on a visit to Kūfa. His assistant, Ziyād, had to take refuge elsewhere. At length, 'Alī wrote to some chiefs who helped Ziyād and the rebels were defeated. But the disturbance, suppressed in one place, reappeared in another. Khirrīt, an influential chief who had till now been faithful to 'Alī, and was his ally at the battles of Jamal and Şiffin, was driven to rebellion. 'Alī tried to bring him round but he escaped along with his associates and reaching Ahwāz incited the people there to revolt. Once the army of Bağra put him to flight but he reappeared and died fighting. This rebellion was thus suppressed but immediately another sprang up at Kirmān. 'Alī appointed Ziyād to suppress it and he succeeded. His rule was so just and wise that it reminded the inhabitants of the rule of Naushirwān. Difficulties on the Syrian front were, however, still there. Disputes with Mu'āwiya dragged on and the latter's men reached even so far as Medīna, Mecca and Yemen. 'Alī despatched troops to these places and re-established his rule there. In the meantime 'Abdullāh-bin-'Abbās got displeased with 'Alī and went away to Mecca. Under these embarrassing conditions, 'Alī considered it advisable to conclude a treaty with Mu'āwiya, by which

Mu'āwiya's rule over Syria and Egypt was recognized whereas the rest of the empire remained under 'Alī. Thus came to an end the conflict between 'Irāq and Syria.

Ali's martyrdom.  
Ramadan 17, 40  
A. H. 25th January  
661.

The conclusion of peace between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya dealt a death-blow to all the hopes which the mischief-making party, now represented by the Khawārij, had built up; for it was in mutual warfare among the Muslims that the secret of their success lay. They were unable to do anything overt, but their underhand conspiracies continued as before. At last three of them conspired among themselves to take the lives of 'Alī, Mu'āwiya and 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ, at one and the same day and hour. The design was that one of them should reach Kūfa, another Damascus, and the third Fustāt and on a particular Friday during the month of Ramadzān, just at the hour of morning prayer, each one should despatch his victim. 'Amr-bin-'Āṣ happened to be indisposed on the fixed day and did not come out for the morning prayer, and another man was killed in his place. In Damascus, Mu'āwiya sustained a grievous wound but ultimately recovered. The part of taking the life of 'Alī was allotted to one 'Abdur Raḥmān bin Muljam. This man managed to secure two other

accomplices in Kūfa. When 'Alī came out for the morning prayer, all the three fell upon him in a body. Ibn Muljam was arrested. One assassin was killed. The third escaped. 'Alī was fatally wounded and removed to his house. He sent for his assassin and said to Ḥasan: "In case I die, this man may be executed. But you must see to it that he is in no way tortured, that he is well-fed and comfortably accommodated. 'Alī succumbed to the injuries on the 17th of Ramadzān.

'Alī died at the age of sixty-three.  
'Alī's reign. His reign lasted four years and nine months. During this short period, there was no territorial expansion in the empire of Islam. On the contrary, thousands of Muslim lives were lost in consequence of internecine warfare. His reign was a source of trouble to himself as well. As already discussed, however, all this was due not to anything which 'Alī did. It is but human to err or at times to show weakness. If 'Uthmān or 'Alī did at all commit a mistake, it should detract nothing from their dignity as the Prophet's Caliphs. The *Khilāfat Rāshida*, or the Righteous Caliphate, as the period of the first four successors to the Holy Prophet is known, is sub-divided into four distinct periods and they have four great lessons for the world of Islam.

It fell to the lot of 'Alī that he should pilot the bark of Islam in times of the most dangerous internecine dissensions. To maintain a proper control of state administration under such conditions is as difficult as to keep a boat steady on stormy waters. Nevertheless inspite of all these trying difficulties, 'Alī certainly displayed no shortcoming in acquitting himself as a worthy successor to his illustrious master, the great Prophet. Right in the midst of internecine warfare, 'Alī displayed a high example of affection and sympathy for brother-Muslims which is without a parallel. The greatest charge brought against him is that he took no action against the assassins of 'Uthmān, and that he did not suppress this mischief with a strong resolute hand. But in the first place, as already shown, he was helpless. And then, he would be exposed to such a charge only in case he had dealt differently with the opposition set up against his own person. His handling of the Khawārij insurrection to which he himself ultimately fell a victim, was likewise gentle. To suppress open rebellion he had to wage war against them but he could never persuade himself, tender-hearted as he was, to pick out these mischief-makers and make an end of them. Like his immediate predecessor, 'Uthmān, the element of fellow-feeling and

gentleness was pronounced in the nature of 'Alī and his dealings with friend and foe were accordingly attuned. His army, no doubt, contained an element of those very mischief-makers. He appointed Muḥammad-bin-Abū Bakr who was one of the assassins of 'Uthmān as Governor of Egypt. Ashtar also, another of the insurgents of 'Uthmān's time, was one of his trusted lieutenants. But even if these be put down to his account as so many failings, they do not detract aught from his dignity as one of the greatest sons of Islam. He was after all human and no man is infallible. But it seems probable that even in these matters, he was somewhat helpless. The opposition of Mu'āwīya added to his helplessness and strengthened the accusation that he did not wish to punish the assassins of 'Uthmān. Worldly power and wealth had no more fascination for him than for his three illustrious predecessors. He took pride in the life of simplicity which he led in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. Purity of motives and selflessness were the key-notes of his life. He had no desire for kingship but when the mantle was cast on his shoulders, he, walking in the footsteps of the Prophet, faithfully fulfilled his responsibility. When he saw that it was impossible to rally the component parts of the empire of Islam to one



common centre of the Caliphate, he contented himself with as much unity as could be achieved and did not hesitate to come to terms with Mu'āwiya. Had there been the faintest desire in his heart for kingship, he would on no account have concluded peace with Mu'āwiya and thereby laid a new foundation of the unity of Islam. It was this peace concluded by his father which, subsequently, inspired Hasan to establish peace in the Muslim world by abandoning all claim to kingship, and thus bring the scattered forces of Islam to a common centre. The unity of Islam which 'Alī had at heart was thus accomplished.

No better choice  
of Caliph could be  
made.

The important fact that should not be lost sight of in forming an estimate of 'Alī is that on assuming the reins of power, he found himself confronted by a most serious situation for which he was not in any way responsible. If he could not check the inevitable course of things, no one else could have done either. In point of knowledge and daring, however, he proved the best possible pilot for the bark of Islam in those stormy days. The two indispensable virtues which qualify a man for kingship over his fellow-men were at the time found in a pre-eminent measure in the person of 'Alī. So far as sound judgment and daring are concerned, he had no equal among the then living



companions of the Holy Prophet. During the reign of 'Umar, an epoch which stands unique in world history in respect of territorial conquest, 'Alī enjoyed the position of specially trusted councillor of the Caliph. No question of any consequence was settled without his consultation. In personal courage and bravery, he was conspicuous among his contemporaries. It was he who succeeded in capturing the most impregnable citadel of Khaibar. In the holy wars during the life-time of the Prophet, he entered the lists in single combats against the most renowned warriors of Arabia and overpowered them. Thus, so far as these two virtues are concerned, the virtues of a sound judgment and courage, the choice of 'Alī as Caliph was the best that could possibly be made. In addition to these he was without a peer in the virtues of piety and tender-heartedness. If the reins of the Caliphate had gone into the hands of a less scrupulous man, it is quite possible that under the circumstances then obtaining, the empire of Islam would have sustained an irretrievable loss. During his reign, there was no doubt bloodshed among the Muslims. But it must also be remembered that whenever he saw the slightest opportunity to avoid bloodshed, he forthwith restrained his hands. He abhorred the idea of division and disintegration among the

Muslims. This is obvious from the attitude he adopted towards Mu'āwiya and his followers. When the Khawārij pressed him to declare them as *kāfirs* for having refused to submit to the Caliph, his reply was a flat refusal. "They are our brethren just the same", he said "even though they have rebelled against our authority." The whole of his regime as Caliph was taken up with the suppression of domestic differences, yet, be it said to his credit, he allowed no weakness to creep in the administration of an empire which extended far and wide. Law and order was maintained on the same high level as during the triumphant period of 'Umar.

From the earliest days, 'Alī's education and up-bringing had fallen into the hands of one who not only stood on a very lofty moral pedestal but who was also the fountain-head from whom the light of learning spread over the length and breadth of the Arabian Peninsula and even beyond Arabia—*viz.*, the Holy Prophet. He was yet a boy of ten when the sun of Islam dawned and 'Alī was among the foremost who welcomed it. In other words, his very intellectual birth took place in the lap of Islam. As he lived under the same roof with the Holy Prophet, occasionally he did the work of a scribe of the Holy Qur'ān. For this reason he had a special

knowledge of the revelation of the various verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'ān. He is said to have arranged the chapters in the order of revelation. During the early period of the reign of Abū Bakr, he devoted, according to a report, full six months to this work. Not only was he a *ḥāfiẓ* i.e., one knowing the whole the Qur'ān by heart; he was also a commentator of high standing. Like Ibn'Abbās, he enjoyed a special position in having a sound knowledge of the Qur'ān. The various Quranic commentaries contain good many of his explanations. In the preservation of Hadīth, too, he had a unique distinction, although, out of over-caution, he seldom reported sayings of the Prophet. As a Mujtahid,\* he possessed a rare skill, and for this gift, he was considered the best jurist among the companions. Most difficult and knotty questions were referred to him and his verdict was considered final. It was this deep knowledge of the Qur'ān and Hadīth which distinguished him so highly. Otherwise there were no special spiritual secrets which the Prophet confided to him to the exclusion of everybody else. The Prophet's mission was for all alike and he had no secrets. Whoever had a greater

\* A Mujtahid is one who exerts the faculties of mind to the utmost, for the purposes of forming an opinion in a case of law respecting a doubtful and difficult point. The great jurists of Islam were all Mujtahids.

opportunity to avail of his company and possessed special gifts of understanding, naturally derived greater benefit from his teachings.

'Ali's devotions.

The whole of 'Alī's life was characterised by abstemiousness. From the earliest days he lived in the company of the Holy Prophet and simplicity and self-denial became second nature with him. His relationship with the Prophet as son-in-law was a guarantee, so to say, that the ease and comfort of life should never have any fascination for him. To earn his living he did every kind of work and labour. Till the very last days of the Holy Prophet, he led the simple life of a poor man. He had no servant or maid-servant in his house, and his wife, Fāṭima would grind corn with her own hands. The Prophet once saw him lying stretched in the mosque in dust and addressed him as *Abū Turāb*, i.e., the father of dust. From this he came to be known as *Abū Turāb*, a title which was very dear to him. After the Prophet too, 'Alī led the same sort of simple life which distinguished Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. Even when he became a king, he led the same simple life, and not the least change was observed in him. The examples of simplicity presented by the Prophet and his four successors stand unrivalled in the annals of kingship in the

world. Monarchs of a vast empire, they led the lives of hermits and they never cast a glance at the worldly riches which came in heaps to kiss their shoes. Kingly palaces and regal robes came their way but these four kings, temporal as well as spiritual, ever took pride in the cottages they lived in, and in the rough course clothes they wore while they worked and laboured for their daily bread. They had no guards at their doors. 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī, one after another, fell victims to the assassin's knife, but not one of them cared to make any special arrangements for his personal safety. Their lives were simpler than those of common people and like them they would go to the mosque for the five daily prayers, unaccompanied by any body-guard. For their own persons, they had no police or military guard. But for the welfare of the state, they were so watchful that the smallest incident on a most distant frontier would forthwith engage their attention." For the good of their subjects, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, they worked day and night but for their own sake they had not a moment of thought to spare. Passion of the service of fellow-man was ingrained in their very natures. Their hearts were devoted to the love of God and their bodies to the service of man.

THE END

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